WHOM DO YOU SAY—?

J. P. ARENDZEN

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WHOM DO YOU SAY—?

A STUDY IN THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION

BY

J. P. ARENDZEN
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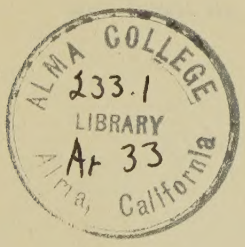

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TO THE FATHERS OF THE CATHOLIC MISSIONARY SOCIETY, WHO IN ENGLAND AND WALES FOR FIVE AND TWENTY YEARS PREACHED THE TRUE FAITH OF GOD-INCARNATE,
1902-1927

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PREFACE

With great diffidence I venture to publish this treatise on the Incarnation. The subject is so great, so deep, so difficult, that it is only by excess of daring that any one can have the courage to write, when human insufficiency is so obvious. My desire to be of use to the educated laity, whom technical Latin treatises do not reach, and to priests or students who may wish to re-read their theology in modern language, shorn of its learned apparatus, overcame my reluctance. The reception given to my treatise on the After Life, under the title of "What becomes of the dead?" was so encouraging that I hope that this new effort with the same purpose may not be without some result. I have to thank many friends for their kind help; Revs. J. Murphy, D.D., J. O'Neil, D.D., B. Grimley, D.D.Ph.D. and J. Blundell, M.A., who with utmost generosity did their best to lessen the blemishes of style and faults in theology, which would have attended my unaided efforts.

J. P. Arendzen.

PART I

INTRODUCTION

Chapter I
THE LIKELIHOOD OF A DIVINE INCARNATION

Chapter II
THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

WHOM DO YOU SAY—?

CHAPTER I

The Likelihood of a Divine Incarnation

§1. *Modern prejudice against the idea of an Incarnation.*
§2. *The purpose of our creation must be some self-manifestation of God to us.*
§3. *A personal God is not unlikely to have personal intercourse with created persons.*
§4. *Man's littleness is no argument against the idea of an Incarnation of God.*
§5. *The Incarnation would ease the problem of the silence of God.*
§6. *The Incarnation would ease the problem of suffering.*
§7. *The Incarnation would ease the problem of sin.*
§8. *The Incarnation would ease the problem of matter versus spirit.*
§9. *The poverty and humility of Jesus of Nazareth are no argument that He cannot be God-Incarnate.*

The Incarnation is a mystery revealed by God. Without revelation human reason could not have ascertained it, whether before, during, or after Christ's

sojourn on earth. Before Christ's birth no one could have known it ; after Christ's departure, no one could have proven it, without the aid of revelation. Moreover, even after it has been revealed, and after the mind has accepted it as true, no man can understand or explain the mystery of the Incarnation as it is in itself. Human reason can only prove that God has revealed it, and that man must believe it. Human reason can grasp, though inadequately, the terms in which the mystery has been revealed. It can answer any objections by showing that it is above reason but not against it, and, once the mystery has been revealed, human reason can show that it answers the hopes and expectations of man, that it provides the key for many problems, that it sheds light on the distressing obscurities with which life on earth is surrounded.

It is with these latter points that we shall first concern ourselves, for unless the doctrine of the Incarnation be first shown to be at least in itself credible, the mind would recoil from the thought and be impervious to any considerations establishing and explaining its truth.

§1. *Modern prejudice against the idea of an Incarnation.*

To many a modern man the belief that Jesus of Nazareth was God Himself, clothed in human nature, the very God Who made this world, with its sun and moon, and Who put the stars in the sky, is inconceivable. It savours of myth and legend, it is a fairy story or a dream of childish minds. To many a modern man it is almost preposterous to place it in the realm of actual fact. He calls it just a religious belief. He reminds us that ancient religions had a number of such

incarnations and supernatural virgin births, and that the heroes of antiquity were all born of gods. The Christian legend indeed he may allow to be the most pure and sublime of them all. Jesus of Nazareth was no doubt an historical figure of rare beauty of character and elevation of mind, this the modern man willingly concedes, but to take Jesus as a physical real incarnation of the infinite God he thinks a crude and clumsy way of viewing things, suitable to the imaginative middle ages but not to the ages of hard fact and scientific outlook, in which we live. The vivid and realistic picturings of the untutored mind had their use, he grants, when they were the only means of expressing man's ideals and strivings after the divine, but the dogmas and doctrines of the past must not be taken to be more than they are : metaphors and poetry labouring to give tangible form to man's yearning after the divine. To take these things literally now, is an impossibility, it is like a grown man trying to think the thoughts of his childhood. God in the manger, God as a carpenter, God entrusting great truths to a set of ignorant Galilean fishermen, God dying on a cross, all that is too obviously impossible to be even discussed by an intelligent person.

And why so ?

Because it is self-evident that God would not do such a thing ! The infinite God would not, could not demean Himself to a thing so paltry, so trifling, so passing, as a short human life amongst Jews in Palestine two thousand years ago. The thing is inconceivable. God is too great to take a part in a fairy tale amongst us, humble dwellers on this insignificant planet. Our outlook has widened, we have seen the

vastness of this Universe and our earthly affairs have dwindled down to their proper proportions. You might as well ask a grown man to believe in Santa Claus or Red Ridinghood again as to ask a man of to-day to take those things literally.

Faith in the Incarnation is sacred, *as a belief*. Yes, a belief that thrilled the hearts of our ancestors and led to countless deeds of love and piety, but it is not a fact.

We may regret that the stage of our childhood has passed away, but we cannot help it, we cannot bring it back. The lovely legend, however sweet, has gone, because we now understand that it was only a legend and that it cannot be true. It cannot be true: such is the verdict of modern "scientific" man. Those who believe in the Incarnation and try to persuade others to believe in it have to deal with a concealed prejudice, with a mood, a mind, with an intangible sort of incredulousness which is hard to overcome.

But why, in all reason, why should a revelation of God in manhood be incredible?

§2 *The purpose of our creation must be some self-manifestation of God to us.*

God is a personal intelligence. God is infinite wisdom. God is infinite love. God has made man after His own image and likeness. We, too, possess wisdom and love. We, too, can know and will. Our thinking and knowing and willing is but a faint reflection of the boundless wisdom and the mighty will of Him who made us, but it is true, it is real in its own lower and limited sphere. As God created intelligences analogous to Himself, is it not likely that He wished some day to speak and have intercourse with them? God

indeed can have made us only for one purpose—that we should know Him and love Him. Otherwise He would not have raised us above dead inorganic matter, or above mere animal life, which perceives with its senses, but has no mind whereby to reach the divine and the infinite. The only thinkable reason why He made us what we are, is that we should turn our understanding towards Him and by the freedom of our will choose Him of our own accord. The highest object of human reason and will must be God. The very act by which God called us out of nothing into being was a proclamation of His blessed will and command : know Me, love Me.

This involves manifestation of Himself to us in *some* way. True, this manifestation might have been limited to God's self-revelation in the Universe and in our own human nature. We can know God by the things He has made. As an artist stands revealed in the work of his hands, the poet in his songs, the musician in the melodies in which he pours out his inmost self, so God stands revealed in the creative effusion of His infinite genius, in this Universe which our eyes behold, our hands grasp, the sounds of which fill our ears. More even than this : God stands in some sense revealed in our own selves, for He made us and we are the work of His hands. Our own personality, our own soul, our heart ; everything that is truly human—a mother's love, a friend's sacrifice, the highest thought of a poet—all these things do reveal God, for it is God who placed the possibilities of all this in human nature as He conceived it and created it.

Still, all those kinds of divine manifestation are only indirect. With all this Universe around us, with all

our knowledge of the possible sublimity and goodness of a human soul, we could still say that God Himself had never directly spoken to us, never in His own person, but only through His works. A spontaneous desire might well arise in the human soul to have direct intercourse with God, to speak with Him as a son to his father and to listen to Him as a friend listens to a friend. We should not have a right to claim such intercourse, but the hope would silently and secretly creep into our breast that He who had done so unspeakably much for us, might of His own goodness do still more. And if in the exuberance of His bounty He decided to speak to us directly without intermediary, could we think of a more perfect way than His taking a human nature upon Himself for this purpose?

If such were His eternal decree, it would be an act of ineffable and unmerited condescension on His part. It would be a sublime exaltation of human nature on our part, but why should it be incredible?

To speak, to be intellectually self-diffusive, is surely in itself a perfection of an intelligent being. God who in a sense speaks when creating, could surely speak in a more sublime way by manifesting His own innermost thought to those finite but thinking creatures whom He had made.

We may be so overcome by the infinite majesty of the infinite God that it seems to us incredible that He should descend so low as to clothe Himself in our nature to speak with us, but have we reason on our side? Creation itself is such "incredible" condescension, that there is surely no unreason in supposing that He who made us might speak to us in the only way

connatural to ourselves, *i.e.*, from human lips which He had made His own.

Supposing God intended to hold intercourse with us, what means would we suggest that He should use in conversing with us ? Some fearful flash of light in the sky, some clap of terrifying thunder, some text written in flaming letters across the sky ? or a sudden protrusion of a gigantic head out of the mountain side in the Alps or Andes, and lips that should frame words heard ten thousand miles around ? Would that be more credible, more worthy of God, more suitable to man than the means the Church says God has actually chosen ?

The Scriptures teach that God having at sundry times and in divers manners spoken in times past unto the Fathers by the prophets, has at last spoken to us by His Son by whom He made the world, who is the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, spoken at last by that Son, who with the Father and the Spirit is the Triune God blessed above all things for ever.

During many ages God chose a few men, whose mind He influenced by His overpowering inspiration, whose lips he moved, whose pen He guided that they should utter and express what He directed them to proclaim in His stead. Such men were prophets and their fellow men listened in awe when they spoke, for they gave a message from God ; but there was a higher, a more intimate, a more direct way of speech left to God. Not to use other men's bodies and souls, other men's hearts and minds, but to assume unto His own person a full human nature, to make human lips and a human tongue His own, to have a human heart and mind

which He should possess as exclusively His own, pervading it and holding it after the manner in which a human personality holds its own nature, so that these two God-owned natures should not form two persons but be only He, the Son, who with the Father and the Spirit rules and reigns, God, world without end. This would indeed be an astounding marvel, unique amongst the works of God, but would it be unworthy of God ? It would be the crowning act of infinite goodness—an act, the truth of which man should accept with adoring exultation and affectionate gratitude, an act which divine kindness might be likely to do, an act to which man in daring moments of highest hope would dream that God might possibly condescend. No man surely should recoil from it as improbable and beyond reason.

§3. *A personal God is not unlikely to have personal intercourse with created persons.*

The root of the difficulty against the Incarnation lies in an imperfect understanding of God. Without being avowed Pantheists, men are tempted to regard God as merely an ocean of being, the Absolute, the Infinite, the Soul of the Universe, the Ultimate Reality at the back of things, the Underlying Substance, Abstract Thought, the Unchanging factor in a world of change, the Ideal towards which all that is, aspires ; or any other phrase that men have used to hide the vagueness, the haziness, the erroneousness of their ideas of God. But in truth God is eminently personal. He created our personality and must possess within Himself to an infinite degree and in an eminent way, whatever perfection is expressed by " personality."

Personality is the highest of all our perfections. It

is the centre of all our faculties, the focus towards which all our actions return, the source of all our energies. It is that which constitutes us in our being and by which we are responsible for all our thoughts, words and deeds. God, even infinitely more than we, is a self-conscious, self-determining Being, an Individual Intelligence who thinks, lives, wills, energises and loves. Since He has made us living portraits of Himself, reasoning and responsible images of His own self, is it so unnatural to suppose that He has directly communicated with us, and that through the instrumentality of our own created nature ? What other way would have been better if He intended to speak to us ?

But how could the Infinite limit Himself to our limited nature ? Is not this a stark contradiction ?

Let us not misunderstand what is meant by the mystery of the Incarnation. The Infinite cannot cease to be infinite, but God does not cease to be infinite by assuming into Himself a human nature, which He has created, by giving being unto that nature, and maintaining it therein through joining it to His own Personality. It is a marvel, but who is so versed in divine things that he dares to call it impossible ?

Some minds view the Incarnation not from God's side but from man's side, and they are so overcome by what is called scientific humility that they think it a monstrous thing to raise so insignificant a creature as man to the height of divinity. We now know the Universe to be so vast that man has practically sunk into nothing. This earth of ours is only a small orb, an insignificant satellite of an insignificant star, for the sun does not even class as a star of the first magnitude. The instellar spaces are so amazingly great that the light

which takes eight minutes to come to us from the sun, takes years to come from the nearest star. We men on earth are like ants on an anthill. We can only strut about on a tiny part of this tiny world and yet we fancy ourselves important. Time was when we imagined ourselves as the centre round which the Universe revolved.

A short time ago an astronomer referred disdainfully to "the God of the Council of Trent." Science, so he claimed, had at last shown us the greatness of God and the littleness of man. It was man's megalomania that had suggested to him the idea of a God in human nature. The scientist in these days had looked into the fathomless depths, the boundless heights of Nature, and, at last grasped the nothingness of man, a mere speck on the wheel of existence, revolving in the irresistible might of its immeasurable extent.

All this talk is an appeal to the imagination rather than to reason ; it is an attempt to terrify man into submission by mere bulk, the application of the common measuring rod to measure mind, and a pair of brazen scales to weigh the weight of thought. Let the sun be distant from the earth some ninety million miles and the furthest star ninety million times further, what is that to thinking man ? The only dignity of size consists in the fact that there is a mind to measure it. What are size and distance but relativities, and what are relativities if there be no thought to conceive them ? One flash of thought in a child's mind is more, is a higher perfection in the scale of being, than the sum total of all the mechanical might of the Universe.

§4. *Man's littleness is no argument against the idea of an incarnation of God.*

What is greatness or littleness of size? The *microscope* has revealed us as many wonders as the telescope. Each atom has been revealed as a sort of solar system, with its centre of energy and its planets and revolving stars, as marvellous as and perhaps more intricate than the solar system of which this earth forms a part. Bacteriology has revealed to us life a myriad times smaller than that of the human body. The scientist with the microscope regards man as a huge bulky, unwieldy animal of vast size, a hundred million times larger than the atom or first centre of life. The scientist with the *telescope* regards man as a mere speck, a mere infinitesimal drop in an ocean of being.

What then is man?

Even if we consider him only from a material standpoint, modern science has taught us the amazing vastness of his size, and if the electrons within an atom were conscious, one human body would appear a universe to them, great beyond all calculation. The fact is that size is a relation perceived by the mind: considered in itself what would be its worth, its dignity, its value, its greatness, its littleness? Must an object a cubic foot in size, be four times less in importance to its maker than an object four times bigger? Is it thus that we men gauge value? Is a statesman or writer or scientist whom nature has endowed with a diminutive body to be of less account than the giant who at a show invites the gaping multitude to come in and examine the astounding bulk of his flesh and bones? All this flourish of trumpets proclaiming the size of the stars and the distance of interstellar spaces to cow

man into trembling humility is a childish and foolish device, unworthy of an intelligent person. As a device to draw people from a belief in the Incarnation it is unworthy of notice, were it not that sometimes weak-minded folk are influenced by what is an appeal, not to reason, but to the physical sense of awe at the view of the materially great. As the infinite God is no more awed at the wide expanse of the heavens than ashamed of the infinitesimally small, having conceived and created both, there is no reason why He should rather choose the blazing disc of a first magnitude star than the body of a man, to dwell therein.

No, if we can see any fitness in things, it is only mind, only man in all this visible Universe, whose nature it would be least unlikely that the Omnipotent Wisdom should assume.

But some will say, what guarantee have we that a thousand stars are not inhabited even as ours, and if their inhabitants are not in every respect like unto us, that they may not be intelligent beings, linked to matter, in some way similar to men? If this be so, why should God favour this insignificant planet and its inhabitants rather than a thousand others? If we are not the only intelligent beings in this Universe, what presumption to think ourselves the uniquely favoured children of the Deity!

This thought may at first seem impressive, yet on second consideration the force of it vanishes and leaves us unmoved. Are there intelligent beings on other planets and stars? It may be so: we cannot tell. What God would do for them, if they exist, we cannot guess. Perhaps there, too, He has become incarnate, we cannot say. May be that, as the poet says:

God has other words for other worlds,
But for this world, the Word of God is Christ.

Perhaps the other worlds are not fallen worlds like ours and had not our need of the Incarnation of God to redeem those that had fallen. For all we know, in all other worlds creatures obeyed God their Creator, and therefore their days of Paradise have never passed away, and God still walks with them, as once He walked with us, in the cool of the evening in the Garden of Eden. In their innocence perhaps God is manifest unto them without having assumed a created nature. Who is there to tell ? This world of ours is perhaps in very deed the smallest and most insignificant of worlds God has made, and we alone are His wayward children, knowing sin and death, amongst a host of sinless creatures endowed with body and soul. Perhaps it was our very insignificance, our very misery, that moved God's pity. As the widow in the Gospel who had ten groats and lost one and then swept her house till she found it, so it may be that God lost this one grain of dust in His Universe which we call our world, and He rested not till He found it and then called all neighbouring worlds together to rejoice with Him that He regained the one earth which seemed lost for a while.

Let no one distress his mind with problems of his own making—problems that are not really problems, for they enter the endless field of mere possibilities. In such matters hopeful, blissful guesses are better than dismal forebodings or gloomy imaginings, for we are dealing with a God, who is both all good and almighty.

We men often call some things things " beneath notice."

There are matters which we consider to be too useless, or foolish, or degrading, to attend to ; too trifling in fact for a serious man.

Why is this so ? Because we men ourselves are very limited and have only a small sphere of possible action. Our time is short, our forces are small. Hence we must carefully regulate our future actions according to their degree of importance. In the brief span at our disposal, with our feeble powers of body and mind, we must economise the output of energy and the objects we spend it on. We must rigorously exclude all actions except those that more immediately concern our ultimate end and everlasting salvation. Only in the measure in which our actions and their immediate objects are directly and necessarily connected with our final end, they are either important or useless, weighty or trifling. We ourselves occupy a definite place in the scale of created being, and we necessarily regard some things as beneath us or above us.

With God matters are different. With Him nothing is important, for He needs nothing. Had He created nothing, He would still be infinite in happiness, and His blessedness would know no end. Neither is aught that He does a tax on His strength, and the Highest being He creates is still infinitely distant from His own perfection. In fact, with God nothing can enter into comparison at all. In that sense, therefore, there is to Him nothing great, nothing important. To regard things as little or great, trifling or important, is *our* way of viewing things, not His. God is infinite, and bestows infinite care on the smallest thing. Infinite

power and infinite might, infinite bounty, living in eternity, can attend to what we are pleased to call trifles, and lose none of its infinite dignity. There is no danger lest God, being absorbed in trifles, should neglect greater things. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and yet not one falls to the ground but the heavenly Father knows it. He has counted the very number of hairs on our head. Look at the lilies of the field, whose splendour exceeds that of Solomon in all his glory. God paints them with every tint and hue, though they are but for a day and to-morrow they wither and are cast aside. How much more will God care for us, whose souls He endowed with glories beyond those of mere matter, however lovely to the eye; us, to whose souls He gave the life that never ends?

The stupefying and deadening influence of modern Pantheism, the drug of "Evolution" stupefies man's mind, so that he sees nothing more than the gibbering phantom of Nature, ever evolving Nature, which, though he spells it with a capital letter, is only a fetish and an idol, a soulless monster, to which he gives a senseless worship, instead of adoring the Living God. In the modern paralysis of thought, men cannot realise the personal loving care which the Living God bestows on the creatures He has made. Hence the idea of a divine incarnation is alien to people's minds. They picture to themselves a God which is a limitless sea of unconscious energy, a soul of the Universe, if you like, which, however, is not a soul, for it neither knows nor thinks, nor wills nor loves. God is to them a force which blindly endeavours to develop into something, it knows not what, but which is decked out with the sonorous title of the Ultimate Ideal, though it is

only understood when it is achieved. Let us rather say it is never achieved, for evolution is everlasting and progress knows no end.

As long as a man moves in this underworld of thought and flounders in this intellectual chaos, the Incarnation is to him a meaningless term. If God is not personal, if God is not an individual intelligence, analogous to ourselves, personal union with a human nature is but a phrase without meaning.

Once it is understood and thoroughly grasped that God is a self-conscious, self-determining, individual, intelligent Being, the possibility of His having personal intercourse with us through the assumption of a human nature becomes a daring hope, a thing to our fond expectations likely to happen, a thing to be looked for, a thing we should scan the horizon for day by day, knowing full surely that it might come to pass at any time.

§5. *The Incarnation would ease the problem of the silence of God.*

If the Incarnation is true, then many sad mysteries, which otherwise would oppress us by their weight and their darkness, become bearable; their grim outlines are softened and grow lightsome. I mean the mystery of the silence of God, of the fact of suffering, the fact of sin, the grossness of matter in contrast with spirit.

Most men have at some time in their lives felt the silence of God. On many this Universe makes the impression of a huge relentless machine. Its laws know no pity, and listen to no prayer. Man's physical strength is negligible. Man's power over Nature's forces, with all his shrewdness and cleverness in mechanics and chemistry and electric engineering, is after

all very slight. An earthquake, a volcanic eruption, a cyclone, a mere storm or wind or a drought, some infection or pestilence, and men are carried off by the thousand, as if they were to Nature no more than the insects we carelessly tread under foot. Man may sometimes crow over a new discovery as a child over a new toy, but in his soberer moods he feels himself caught and held, confined and crushed by the immense unpitying forces of nature. It seems all just one realm of law, stern, unchangeable law. No doubt there are also manifestations of beauty and benevolent design. Man cannot doubt it. But even these manifestations by their unvarying regularity, seem enshrined in law and they appear like machine-made articles, rather than the outcome of a beauty-loving and merciful mind. Men are often heard to complain of the strange hiddenness and the terrible silence of God, and yet when faith teaches them that God has broken silence by miracle and prophecy, and finally, by the Incarnation, they refuse to believe. When they are told that God Himself in human nature has walked amongst men and conversed with them, then as wilful children, never satisfied, they scorn the thought as utterly inconceivable and unworthy of thinking men.

Now in very truth the Incarnation answers the secret wish of man, the overmastering longing of every intelligent being to have intercourse with God who created him. Without the Incarnation God's silence is a cruel enigma. With the Incarnation, the problem, if not solved, is eased, so that man can possess his soul in patience till he sees God face to face and converses with Him as with a friend. Christ has said: "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me walketh not

in darkness." Without God-incarnate this world is a darksome place.

§6. *The Incarnation would ease the problem of suffering.*

Let us consider next the fact of suffering. The mystery of pain is undeniable, and to some extent insoluble. No attempt at solving the problem of evil has ever completely succeeded. When all is said that can be said, man, still sore at heart, continues to ask querulously: Why? Why did God, almighty and all good, make a world with so much sorrow, agony and pain in it? There is but one answer which, though not explaining fully, yet takes the sting out of the difficulty, and makes the problem tolerable to heart and mind. It is the story of man's fall and his redemption by God-Incarnate. Without the Incarnation, it is so hard not to think of God as callous and indifferent to all the tears and bitter pains of the teeming, toiling multitudes; as seated on His throne of bliss, not caring for the misery here below.

In the Incarnation God in human nature went through the cycle of human suffering and carried His cross to Calvary. This shows to evidence that whatever may be the solution of the problem of evil and of pain, it is not divine indifference to human sorrow. God minds, nor is His only an idle pity, for He bent down to mankind and shared their suffering. Would anything else ever have persuaded man that suffering is not an ultimate evil, that God loves man though He allows him to suffer, anything else whatever, I repeat, but God's own agony on the Cross?

A blasphemous book appeared some years ago with the title *The Martyrdom of Man.* The book ended with

a shriek of defiance, as if the writer were stung to madness with the story of the helpless, hopeless, endless sufferings of man. But the writer's blasphemy would have died on his lips had he believed in God Himself as fellow-martyr with man. Instead of being a display of impotent rage, his book would have been a prayer of sorrowful self-surrender to the God-man, who became his fellow sufferer to show His love for man. The religion of the Incarnation is the only religion that has dared to face realities, the only one that has not been scared by ugly facts, but has had the courage to meet them, not to ignore them, or hide them, or defy them with cynicism or pride, but to meet them with God and Him crucified. Surely man, instead of scorning the Incarnation as incredible, should at least in his sufferings dream and hope that it might be true, and welcome with eagerness whatever might prove it a fact.

Historically speaking, belief in the Incarnation has alleviated human suffering for two thousand years. Because of Christ crucified myriads of people have taken the fact of suffering without murmur and have lovingly submitted. The pierced hands of Christ are always wiping the tears away from men's eyes. In all the long story of mankind nothing has lessened the sum of human sorrow more than the story of God made man. If it be a fable, it is the loveliest and grandest fairy story ever told, having brought smiles to suffering lips these twenty centuries, and even now not having lost the newness of its potent charm for those who believe. Perhaps, after all, it is not a fable but a fact.

§7. *The Incarnation would ease the problem of sin.*

Lastly let us face the fact of sin. The fact that the wicked prosper has made man murmur from earliest days. God sends down His rain on the just and the unjust alike ; God seems strangely unconcerned with the moral affairs of this world, as if sin and virtue were the same to Him. Sin floods this world, and sin means the utter failure of some and the partial failure of all. There seems to be nothing to stem the ever rising tide of sin. Reward and punishment are spoken of for the world hereafter, but the world here continues without much visible sanction for the moral law. It looks as if God had left us to our moral misery and had abandoned the world.

The Incarnation dispels this darkness and shows us God. It shows us that God hates sin, it shows us His own energizing power to undo sin by living amongst us without sin, by offering His own manhood in atonement for sin, by giving us a flawless pattern of a human life free from sin. God-incarnate is the supreme Rebuker of sin, the Supreme Helper against sin. The Incarnation shows in itself how God is both the pardoner and punisher of sin. Whether God would have become incarnate had man not fallen, none of us know, but as a matter of history the Incarnation is bound up with the atonement for sin. Left to himself, man is inclined to make light of sin. He finds easy excuses for his own sin. He sees sin prevalent in others. He has never known a person without sin. Man is apt to say to himself that sin is a common frailty, a misfortune, a return to primitive barbarism, but the guilt, the intrinsic heinousness, the wilful offence against a good God, the eternal, and in themselves irretrievable, con-

sequences of sin become more and more obscure to man as his sins increase. Thus man moves in a sort of vicious circle ; the more he sins the more he tries to hide the greatness of sin from his own eyes ; and the more he succeeds in hiding the greatness of sin, the more he sins. What man supremely needed was a startling and overwhelming manifestation of what sin is in real truth, in the eyes of God.

It is through the Incarnation that the Holy Spirit has convinced the world of sin, of justice and of judgment. No man could have imagined a more complete rebuke to sin than the fact that God clothed Himself in human nature and underwent suffering and death to undo sin. This rebuke does more than the most vivid manifestation of the torment awaiting unrepentant sinners, for it is at the same time the supreme manifestation of God's pity for the sinner. Many philosophers and wise men have set forth many eloquent considerations for their fellow men to persuade them to refrain from sin. Does any one seriously maintain that any of these philosophers and wise men, and all of them together, have done more to lessen the sins of men than Jesus of Nazareth, than the conviction that God died on the Cross to atone from sin ? True, even God-incarnate has not taken human liberty away, even He left the possibility of sin amongst His followers, but it cannot be seriously denied that where the Cross reigns sin has been lessened ; where the fairy tale of Christ "das Maerchen von Christus" has gripped the human soul, there even frail man has put up a fair fight with evil, there examples of sanctity have been seen, unknown elsewhere. If this be the historical outcome of the Incarnation, the mystery is worth con-

sidering with humble reverence, for it possesses at least one hall-mark of truth : it has made for good, whereas a lie makes for evil, and a mere fable or fancy bears no permanent fruit. Excited imagination may have a momentary beneficial result, but the recoil is not slow to follow.

Christianity has stood the test of almost twenty centuries and Christianity is faith in the Incarnation. Take the Incarnation away and there is nothing to relieve the dark mystery of sin, nothing effective to stem the withering, burning, destroying lava-stream of moral evil. History reveals it as the most exalting faith mankind has ever known. Can it be totally devoid of truth ?

§8. *The Incarnation would ease the problem of matter versus spirit.*

There is a fourth mystery which harasses the thoughtful man : the grossness of matter in contrast with spirit. Man has sublime ideals. He may not have the strength of mind and will to follow them up, but he has not often been without some dreams of spiritual achievement, even though alas ! they remained but dreams. In his sublimest moments man seems hampered and hindered by the grossness of his material body. The best men of the world have sometimes at least felt inclined to cry out with Saul of Tarsus : " Who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" Men have despised their bodies, and even, like the fakirs of the East, have mutilated and mangled them as if they loathed them. All this material world has been declared an illusion, or a thing of evil, the curse of the spirit, and its prison house.

Gnostics spoke of a ' fall of Wisdom ' when matter was created. Manichees thought matter was made by an evil god. Buddhists bewail the wheel of existence, and Schopenhauer advocated the cessation of the human race by suicide of the individual or of the race. Christian science, that modern paralysis of the brain, declares all this world a make-believe of mortal mind. The modernist, who disregards Christianity in fact, but who for many reasons thinks it wise to retain the name, argues against the grossness of the antiquated dogma of the resurrection of the body. Spirit alone will remain, he says.

And yet—is matter really evil ?

Can a good God create an evil or even a useless thing ? If the flesh in itself is evil, then our human life is a ghastly monstrosity, for we are linked to this body of ours the whole length of our stay on earth. Is the beauty of our body, are its manifold achievements really wrong ? Are the melodies heard by our ears, the glories we have seen with our eyes really nought but a snare and a deceit ? Eating and drinking and sleeping, are they really contemptible and hateful and unworthy of man ? Our bodily and physical instincts are so strong and apparently invincible. Is it right to eradicate them, and to make ourselves as little human as is possible ? Is that sanctity ? Some religious leaders have thought so, and have drawn millions of men after them. Their doctrines had an air of spirituality and sublimity, and misled many. The recoil from their fanaticism has either caused gigantic disasters in the human race, or made the bulk of men pass them by, treating them as insane, and their "religion" an impossibility for the ordinary man. Yet the problem remains and torments many souls.

The Incarnation, though it does not solve the difficulties, decides the problem. It is a question no longer. *Verbum caro factum est.* The Word was made flesh. God was clothed not merely in spirit, but with a human soul and a true human body. God has sanctified our whole manhood, its materiality as well as its spirituality, by assuming it unto Himself and uniting it to His own Person. And He has made this union everlasting, for, as long as God shall be God, God shall be man also. At first people may think it a degradation to imagine God with a body, eating, drinking, sleeping, suffering, dying. But on second thoughts they soon realize that as the sunlight is not affected by the things it shines upon, so the Divine Nature does not alter its pure spirituality by the personal union of human nature with God the Son. They see that what is not below God's dignity to create, cannot be against God's dignity to assume as His own. Even matter is the outcome of God's intelligence and will, and the humblest functions of the human body are designed by God. This body of ours is not a degrading appendage to the spirit. God looked on all that He created and He said it was very good. The fierce hatred, the contemptuous tolerance, the gross gratification of the human body are all alike wrong. To be born, to live holily, to die and to rise again with a glorified body to live for ever in full manhood in the divine Presence, that is the magnificent scheme, conceived by God for our race. The realization of this ideal in historical fact is brought about by the Incarnation in which the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us and we saw His glory as that of the Only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Nothing is known that has led more markedly to the sanctification of the human body than the belief in Christmas-night and Easter-morn. Man's struggle with the lower passions of his body continues, but man has been less often defeated, less by a myriad times, because he remembered the Virgin Mother and the Child she bore, because he regarded his own flesh with reverence and awe since in Christ it is seated at the right hand of God. Reconciled to the thought that in Christ matter and spirit have met and coalesced into one being, to the exaltation of the former without the degradation of the latter, man has found through the Incarnation strength and peace of soul and dominion over his animal nature, such as he did not know before. Look at the pagan world outside Christianity, look at the Mohammedan world, or the nominally Christian world in lands where the belief in the Incarnation has grown dim. There cynicism, sensuality and moral despair of man, joined to strangest ethical perversions, are rife. But where the Angelus bell still tolls and tells people morning, noon and night that " an angel announced unto Mary and she conceived by the Holy Ghost," where the Virgin Mother still holds out her divine Babe to the adoration of the faithful, there greater chastity, self-control, inner harmony of life prevail. Is all this the outcome of an imagined occurrence, of something that never really happened ? Would a God who leaves the fierce contrast between body and soul, matter and spirit unreconciled and who seems to disown half of all He has made, be really greater than He who embraces both matter and spirit and keeps them near Himself in the Manhood which He has raised to the throne of His Glory ?

The majority of those who reject the Incarnation—perhaps, almost all of them—do so on a thoughtless, hasty, *a priori* judgment. The idea of the Incarnation is entertained just for a moment, glanced at, as it were, and cast aside as a manifest impossibility. If only people would harbour the thought a little longer, with deeper seriousness, with greater mental effort, if they would be fair to themselves and state distinctly and in detail wherein the supposed impossibility really lies, one objection after the other would soon be realised as unsound, and finally as idle and untenable. The mind might still shrink from the Incarnation, from the act of infinite divine condescension involved in it, from the manifestation of infinite pity, love, tenderness, and patience, but it would be as from a thing almost too good to be true ; not from a thing absurd, but a thing so sublime that one felt dazed at the height and the depth of the mystery, and only afraid of one's boldness in daring to think it.

§9. *The poverty and humility of Jesus of Nazareth are no argument that He cannot be God-incarnate.*

Whereas some minds set aside the idea of the Incarnation on general principles, others see less difficulty in admitting the *abstract* possibility of the mystery, but they feel that it could not have taken place in the historic figure of Jesus of Nazareth. Even if it be possible in the abstract that God should become man, why this one individual Jew ?

The answer to this difficulty really embraces the bulk of this book. We can here only give some general considerations which should dispose the reader to re-

gard the question with favourable eyes and an open mind. Supposing then that you knew nothing of the actual life of Christ, but that you were dreaming of some possible incarnation, how as a matter of fact would you imagine it as likely to take place ? By the sudden descent of a glorious superman from the sky ? A man whose face was always dazzling to behold, as the face of Moses descending from mount Sinai ? A man who in his intercourse with his fellowmen displayed an erudition and an accumulated knowledge beyond that of the greatest teachers at human centres of learning ? A man who at every turn used miraculous powers to supply himself with riches, comfort and service ? One whose life-story would exceed the marvels of the weirdest tale of the Arabian nights ? A prince, a warrior, a poet, a lawyer, a teacher, or what ? Must he live in a palace and myriads of flunkeys bar access to his sacred person ? Must the splendour of his court awe even the greatest millionaires and be gaped at by the poor and sorry crowd ?

Human glory, majesty, earthly splendour, amazing mental feats of knowledge, genius, cleverness, the trappings of royalty, the learning of a professor, the beauty of an Apollo, the strength of Samson—all the external show the world can furnish—or even the glory of some Greek god enthroned on Olympus amongst his vassals, would all that or any of it, be really big for God dwelling amongst us ? Would it really enhance his divine Majesty ? Would fabulous wealth, a round of ceaseless human enjoyments, a life of unparalleled earthly happiness without one hour of human sorrow, really be the most worthy manifestation of the Godhead in human flesh ?

Almost any one would answer these questions in the negative. Instinctively we feel it incongruous to deck out the deity with the tinsel of human glory. What then shall we choose? Why not a man, perfectly holy, perfectly good? That surely is the only worthy manifestation of God, the only thing that suits God. Human nature perfect in itself. Perfect in strength and in tenderness, perfect in simplicity and yet awful in wisdom; adorable in sinless holiness, yet the embodiment of affection and loving-kindness, mighty in word and deed, yet lovable as a child, exercising dominion over all nature when pity for fellowmen demanded it, yet without endeavouring to gain the baubles of earthly enjoyments and honours for himself.

We leave the filling in of the outlines of this picture to the reader. The colours used to paint perfect, sublime, divine manhood, are naturally everywhere almost the same, though the words may somewhat differ. The natural imagination of most people would also lead them to dream of the Perfect Man as of one who had suffered and undergone dread sorrows and pains and yet had triumphed, not by smiting his enemies in fierce anger and gloating over their dismay, but by showing that the height of his pitying love went infinitely beyond what their malice could contrive. Even Plato, regarded by many as the greatest heathen thinker that history knows, spoke of his perfect man as dying on a cross. Has not all this been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth? Has there ever been a better man than the prophet of Galilee? After two thousand years of consideration, do not all who really know about Him still agree that whosoever He was, He remains the One Exemplar of goodness, unselfishness, holiness, tender-

ness, to which men look, an Exemplar unsurpassed and, as far as we can see, unsurpassable ?

Why should not He be the Man whose human nature was the human nature of God ? His public life was short, but surely many years and old age would not have added to the soft effulgence of that divine human life. His life ended in a sweat of agony and He met death, nailed to the Tree, but it would not have added to His worth if He had died on the softest couch or if, without death, He had ascended to the music of a myriad choirs. Let a man give these matters quiet, sober, humble thought, admitting that there may be more in heaven than he at first thought of in his philosophy, then he will not be swift, nor loud, in denying that in Jesus of Nazareth God became man and dwelt amongst us.

CHAPTER II

THE MYSTERY IN THE INCARNATION

§1. *God must always be infinitely mysterious to us.*
§2. *Even in Revelation an element of mysteriousness must always remain.*
§3. *The Incarnation, although revealed, remains a mystery.*

THE Incarnation is with the Blessed Trinity *the* mystery of the Christian Religion. The Christian Religion teaches indeed a number of different mysteries, but the Incarnation and the Trinity are so central in her doctrinal system, and bear their mysterious character so plainly almost in their very statement, that Christian custom attaches the designation *mystery* spontaneously to the two central truths which deal with the innermost life of the Godhead.

The Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation are connected mysteries. In some sense they are identical. The Blessed Trinity teaches us that in God there is one divine nature, yet three persons. The Incarnation speaks of two natures, one divine and one human, but one divine person, that of God the Son. It is through the Incarnation that God has revealed unto us the Blessed Trinity. We learnt the Blessed Trinity from the fact that Christ is God, though He is not the Father, who sent Him, nor the Holy Spirit whom He sent, so that, though there is but one God, there is within the

Godhead, Christ the Son, and Another, and yet Another, whom Christ called Father and Holy Spirit.

It is imperative therefore that we should be clear on the nature of a Christian mystery.

§1. *God must always be infinitely mysterious to us.*

The divine intelligence is infinite, the human mind is finite. The difference therefore between God's mind and ours is infinite. Now we must not think that the difference merely consists in that God knows infinitely more things than we do, in the sense that He has a greater number of different objects which He understands. The difference consists not merely in a difference of contents, or in the number of things understood, but in the very nature and depth of the understanding itself. If God deigned to give us information about absolutely *all* things which He has created, if we knew all things in the Universe, and none whatever had escaped our notice and grasp, even so our knowledge would remain infinitely distant from that of God, because God understands them in another way. He understands them because He understands Himself. Created things are but partial reflections of His own infinite activity, or, to use a metaphor, they are fragments of a broken mirror, reflecting the Infinite Light. God knows them all because He *is* the Light and He fully understands Himself.

Now this knowledge no creature can ever have. We can never fully understand God. God could not make a creature that could fully understand Him, for He would make another god, which is a contradiction in terms. There is Someone who fully understands God, that is God the Son, but He is not a creature. The

Blessed have a knowledge of God which is direct and immediate indeed, and not through the intermediacy of other creatures, but their knowledge, though direct, is not infinite, is not divine in itself. The object of their vision is indeed God Himself, but their power of vision is created and limited ; it is not God's power, but only a created one, infinitely distinct and different from that of God. Hence God is the Everlasting Mystery to us and to all minds which He will or can create. The absolute, necessary and everlasting transcendence of God above all created intelligence, the intrinsic mysteriousness of God to us is the unavoidable result of our creation. It can never be removed, it can never cease, it can never even be lessened for all eternity. The highest of the Saints in bliss must say to God : " O God, I see Thee, I behold Thee face to face, but I do not comprehend Thee, I cannot encompass Thee and grasp Thee all around by my knowledge or see Thee through and through. I can never know Thee as Thou knowest Thyself, for Thou art God and I am but Thy creature."

The willing and loving acknowledgment of God as the impenetrable mystery is essential to a true act of adoration. The revolt against this mystery is the supreme sin; in a sense it is *the* sin, in comparison with which all other sins sink into insignificance. There are to-day, and no doubt there always have been, some such rebel intelligences as are guilty of this sin. They would climb up to the throne of God and know things from the height of His glory, only to be cast into the darkness below and the mocking folly of hell. One sometimes opens a modern periodical, or a modern treatise, and shrinks back in horror, for it thrills with

the fierce hope that one day Humanity shall tear the mystery from the heart of God. It is like looking in the eyes of Satan the moment before he was hurled into hell. The essential incomprehensibility of God, then, always remains.

Now God exceeds the uttermost grasp of the human mind not merely by, what I may call, quantitative excess, in the sense that there always will be more to know, God being as it were an ocean of being, the shores of which the tiny craft of our mentality can never reach. God also exceeds human understanding by His innermost nature, qualitatively, if that word be allowed. Divine being and human being have nothing whatever in common, not even *being*, for God *is* in another way than man *is*. Our being and God's being are infinitely different: there only exists an analogy between them. Man is an image, a reflexion, an off-shadowing, a creative effect. God is the reality, self-subsistent, self-contained, eternal. If a metaphor can help us, we might say that God is related to us as a man is related to his own reflexion which he sees in a mirror. Of course, this is only a metaphor. A man does not cause the existence of his portrait in the mirror, for he does not create the mirror nor the laws of reflexion. He is only responsible for the reflexion by standing in front of the mirror. But the metaphor may help us to grasp the fact that God is not in the same category of being with us at all, as the living man is not in the same category with his shadow or reflexion.

God therefore exceeds the grasp of our mind not merely in spiritual size but in intrinsic being. We say God is an infinite spirit, but thereby we do not mean that God is like our own spirit, only without our limita-

tions and imperfections. We mean that God and our soul are immaterial, but we do not place God in the same category as ourselves. God *is*, but has no body ; our soul is, and can be without body. So far the analogy goes, but no farther, God's being and our being are intrinsically, infinitely different.

§2. *Even in Revelation an element of mysteriousness must always remain.*

Given this intrinsic incomprehensibility of God, we conclude that within God there may be mysteries ; that is, there may be within Him such realities as find no reflexion or revelation in anything we know on earth, realities the nature of which we not only could never guess, but which, even if the information of their existence within the Godhead could reach us, we could not grasp. Towards these realities, if information concerning them reached us, we should stand somewhat as the man born blind stands towards the world of light and colour. Such a man might, through speaking with his fellowmen, become convinced that beyond the sphere of his sense-perception there was another reality, completely beyond his utmost endeavours to grasp. His fellowmen might tell him that some lights were intense, some dim ; that some colours were bright, some dull. The blind man might learn to speak correctly about shades of light and colour so as to deceive those who could see. His knowledge of the Universe would be truly enriched by all the information he received about the world of colour. He would learn about some of the wonders of the starry sky and the boundless spaces of the firmament. He would understand something of night and

day, summer and winter. He would learn something of the beneficent effluence of a vast globe of fire a hundred million miles away, which his fellowmen called the sun, and of the soft influence of a lesser globe, called moon, at night. He would learn a myriad things, but what light is *in itself* he would not know. There would remain an element of mysteriousness, which nothing could remove, as long as he remained blind. The essence of that mystery he would never understand. The utmost ingenuity of mind, the utmost keenness of his remaining four senses, would reveal to him nothing about the, to him, intrinsic mysteriousness of light in itself.

On the other hand, it would be absurd to maintain that the information from his fellowmen about this reality in the Universe was simply nothing to him, and that after they had spoken he knew no more than before. It would be a revelation to him, though the mystery of light remained unsolved.

Now God can reveal. God continually reveals Himself in His creation. From the things He has made we can infer much about God. All creation bears some analogy to the First Cause that called it into being. But God can reveal beyond and above His manifestation in Creation. I can express myself not merely in what I do, but also by what I say. One intelligence can communicate with another and convey information. God can speak. Not that He needs a vocal apparatus and a human throat to do so. He can miraculously infuse knowledge into a human mind, and the man who receives the information can tell his fellowmen by human speech. Christianity teaches that God has spoken. That is the core and essence of Christianity.

It is a revelation " from without," *ab extra*, as theologians say, of new truth by God to the minds of men. God, who, at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days hath spoken to us by a Son.

There is much talk in these days of the autonomy of the human reason. The talk is mostly nonsense. It is true that for each individual his reason is the only instrument by which he can grasp truth. Take a man's intelligence away and he can think no longer. There is no other way of conveying truth to a man except by and through his mind. Even God could not convey information to an individual who had no mind, for he would not be a man at all. But this autonomy of reason is made to mean that a man cannot accept as true any statement except that which he himself has reasoned out, by argument or inference, from the data already in his mind. Man is supposed to be unable to assent to any statement, the intrinsic truth of which he himself with his own intelligence does not grasp. This is maintained only with regard to religion, whereas daily experience proclaims its absurdity in every other sphere.

Reason autonomous, indeed! Nothing is more dependent than human reason. Not a millionth part of the things we know we ourselves have verified or understand. For the bulk of all our information we rely on the " ipse dixit " of our neighbour. There never was an age when man more confidently appealed to the knowledge of experts, without having the opportunity of seeing for himself the truth of their statements. The man who built his life on " the autonomy of his reason " would succumb to bodily and

mental starvation in a fortnight. Most of the truth we hold comes to us " from without." We accept it because in infinitesimal small portions it is divided and distributed in the minds of our fellowmen. They tell us it is so, and we trust them. Thus we gather information from others and use it, adding it to the little stock of truths which we individually have seen and perceived for ourselves. The grandest power we possess is to accept truth from others. Without this power man would never leave the nursery, and the story of mankind would be that of stagnation, of endless beginnings without any progress.

Now this capacity of accepting truth from others, this capacity for real mental assent, though our own mind does not see the identity of subject and predicate, but rests on the fact that someone else sees it, God has used in order to aid men in their spiritual life. He has revealed mysteries to them.

Now revelation is of two kinds. Truths, which man could by his unaided reason attain to, but to which as a matter of fact he did not attain, God can reveal. Such truths once revealed, can be understood, and grasped by the human mind. God on the other hand can reveal truths, which in themselves are essentially above and beyond the capacity of the human mind. Not only could the unaided human mind never ascertain them, but even after revelation, the human mind could not understand *how* subject and predicate are actually joined together. The fact can be revealed, but the understanding of the fact must infinitely exceed any human endeavour. Hence we speak of mystery in the case of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, of Grace, of the Eucharist, of the Beatific Vision. God has

revealed the terms of the mystery, and man can grasp the meaning of the terms, and, believing God's statement, man can join these terms together, but he cannot understand how they are joined.

The one divine nature is three persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Christ is God, and Christ is man. Grace is a participation of the divine nature. Man, though finite will see the infinite God face to face.

These statements are a real enrichment of our human knowledge. Our mental assent is given to them, as an acceptance of the fact that things are as God says they are, though we cannot see how they are.

We have something parallel in the order of mere nature. The law of gravity is at present a profound natural mystery to us. All bodies exercise attraction towards one another. We know the fact, we know the laws which this attraction follows. But what the force is, which we call gravitation ; why it acts as it acts, *how* it attracts, these things at present we do not know, and perhaps on earth never shall know.

Or take electricity. We use it, we produce it, we regulate it, but what it is no one knows. Scientists discuss whether it is a mere force or motion, or perhaps a fluid. Why and how it acts in the way it does no one knows. Possibly we shall never know. Our forced ignorance in these natural matters may help us to realize our ignorance in matters of supernatural revelation. God can reveal a fact, and yet leave the why and the how of the fact unrevealed.

§3. *The Incarnation, though revealed, remains a mystery.*

God has revealed that Jesus of Nazareth God is the Son made man. We can understand the statement,

we can accept it as true, but how God is man, how two natures can be owned by one single person we do not know.

We only know of persons who possess one nature completely adequate to their personality. Whether it would be possible for a finite person to possess two natures we cannot say. We have to deal with an infinite and eternally pre-existent personality which assumes a new nature in time, yet retaining its own nature utterly unchanged. All our reasoning powers can do is to state the revealed truth exactly, to understand the precise point in which the mystery lies, and to show that though it is above and beyond our reason it is not against it. Our own reason, being a revelation of God in the order of nature, cannot be in contradiction to a truth revealed by the same God of infinite truth. Reason must therefore be able to meet an objection which would claim to prove the Incarnation self-contradictory.

The Incarnation must for us always remain unintelligible ; not in the sense that we cannot understand the terms of the revealed truth, or that the revelation means nothing to us, but in the sense that our human intelligence can never see and therefore never explain how Christ is God. We can only understand that the fact is so. The readers of this treatise on the Incarnation therefore must not expect the impossible. The Incarnation will remain to the reader as mysterious after reading this book as before. Or, rather, it is hoped that it will be to him more mysterious than before he perused its pages. It is the work and aim of a theologian to bring his reader to the very brink of the bottomless depth of the mystery, to show him the very

profundity of God's revelation, not to send down his plumb-line and measure it. If he leaves the reader in the attitude of the Psalmist—*mirabilis est scientia tua ex me et non potero ad eam*—then the theologian has succeeded. The modern man wants the mystery explained, the Christian is satisfied to realize how inexplicable it is. The Catholic Church can only state the mystery, and as the centuries pass on she will state it with ever-increasing precision. As generations come and go she will formulate her statement in terms suitable to the mentality of each age, ever maintaining the revelation in the same sense in which it was given by Christ and His Apostles.

The inquisitive mind of man has asked and will continue to ask questions regarding this revelation until the end of days. The Church will always be able to answer all questions the lack of reply to which would endanger the correct understanding of the fact revealed, for it is her task to keep clear in the minds of her children what it is precisely that God has said. But the Church has never made, nor can ever make, any endeavour to explain the mystery, as it were lessening the mysteriousness of it, or endeavouring to make us, as it were, dimly see how it is possible. No human endeavour, continued for indefinite ages, can bring us one single inch further in fathoming this mystery.

In the twentieth century we stand towards it exactly as we stood in the first. To claim to explain is childish folly and impotent blasphemy. It is often said in these days that Chalcedon in 451 A.D. was an acknowledgment of defeat, a declared bankruptcy of Christian thought in the matter of the Incarnation, "*for it*

explained nothing." Those who utter such absurdities, by their very utterance prove that they have not the remotest idea what a divine revelation is, what a divine mystery is. A mystery can be stated with ever greater lucidity and exactness, and this statement can be grasped with various degrees of keenness of intellectual perception, but a divine mystery which can be " explained," or which can be understood in itself, is no divine mystery at all. A man who cannot say : " God has spoken ; I know what He has said ; I do not understand how it can be ; but He has said it. I believe and I adore," that man is not a Christian. A Christianity without mystery and without faith is only a modern sham. It is not the Christianity of Christ. Let no one trouble to open this book with the hope that the Incarnation will be plain to him at the end of it or that it will be less an act of faith to believe it.

There is plenty of facile writing available which explains the Incarnation away and thus leaves no mystery. Let those that will, beguile themselves with it. The purpose of this treatise is, with the help of God, so to state the mystery that the reader, realizing the infinite greatness of the truth revealed, may adore God, who gave the revelation of such truth to men.

PART II

Chapter I
THE STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE

Chapter II
CHRIST'S DIVINITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Chapter III
ANSWER TO SCRIPTURAL DIFFICULTIES

Chapter IV
CHRIST'S DIVINITY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

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THE DIVINE SUBLIMITY OF THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST

CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE

§1. *The definition of Chalcedon.*
§2. *The distinction between person and nature, a simple and obvious truth.*
§3. *How to express personality in terms of consciousness.*
§4. *The belief in Christ's divinity does not lessen belief in His humanity.*
§5. *The definition of Chalcedon unalterable for all time.*

§1. *The Definition of Chalcedon.*

In the year A.D. 451 on the 22nd day of October the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon, consisting of some six hundred bishops, under the Presidency of the Legates of Pope Leo 1, decreed in its fifth session as follows :—

The Council sets itself against those who endeavour to divide the mystery of the Incarnation into a duality of sons, it excludes from participation in the sacred mysteries those who dare to declare that the Godhead of the only-begotten one is passible, and it withstands those who imagine a mingling or a confounding of the two natures in Christ, it casts out those who in folly assert that the form of a servant, taken from us, is of a celestial nature, or of some nature different from ours,

it declares anathema those who have invented the myth that before the union there were two natures in the Lord, but that after the union there is only one.

Following then, the Holy Fathers, we all unanimously teach and proclaim, that we confess Jesus Christ, our Lord, to be one and the selfsame son, perfect regarding His Godhead, and perfect also regarding His manhood, the selfsame to be verily God and verily man, out of a rational soul and a body ; of the same substance with the Father as regards His Godhead and the selfsame of the same substance with us as regards His manhood, with regard to all things, like unto us, except sin.

Before the ages He was indeed begotten of the Father as regards His Godhead but in the latter days the selfsame was on account of us and of our salvation born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, as regards the manhood. One and the selfsame is acknowledged to be Christ, Son, only begotten, in two natures, without confusion, without division, without separation, for the difference of natures is no way taken away through the Union, but rather what is proper to either nature is preserved, and unites into one person and one subsistence (hypostasis) and He is not parted or divided into two persons, but One and the selfsame Son, and only begotten, God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ. This of old the prophets spoke concerning Him and He Himself the Lord Jesus Christ taught us and the creed of the Fathers also has handed down.

These things then being formulated with the utmost precision and care possible, the holy and ecumenical synod defines that it is not lawful for any one to propose any other belief or to teach it to others.

§2. *The distinction between person and nature an obvious truth.*

It has often been said, but without justification, that the Catholic Church in expressing the mystery of the Incarnation has bound herself to the terms of ancient philosophy, and that as the old philosophy has passed away, the phraseology of the ancient councils has become simply meaningless to the modern man.

This is a complete misconception. The doctrine of the Incarnation rests on the distinction between nature and person. In Christ there are two natures, the divine and the human, but only one person, that of God the Son, the Second person of the Blessed Trinity. The explanation of the mystery is beyond the greatest intellect, but the meaning of the mystery is intelligible to the simplest child.

Every child spontaneously arrives at the knowledge of the distinction between nature and person. Imagine we come across a child in the dark, hold it, handle it, pass our hands over its features and body and ask: "What is that? Is that a big doll?" The answer will come: "No, it is a little boy, it is a little girl." Supposing we alter our question and ask, not, "What is that?" but "Who is that?" the child will spontaneously answer with its own personal name: "I am John, I am Mary." By its answer the child has proven that it knew that in the first case it was asked for its nature and in the second for its person.

Practically every human language, though spoken by barbarians, betrays by an elaborate system of different pronouns, personal, relative and demonstrative, that the distinction of nature and person is continually in its thought. On this primæval human

knowledge the terms of the mystery of the Incarnation are based. They are independent of all philosophy. They are based on a primary fact of human consciousness.

Every man is fully aware that, though his fellow men share something with him, they are not he. They share with him his nature, but not his person. They are *what* he is, but they are not *who* he is. A man's personality is essentially incommunicable to another person. Personality is something one and indivisible. As a matter of fact in many languages it is expressed simply by the number "One." Someone, quelqu'un, einer, and so on. It is just the one unity, from which all other unities in human knowledge are derived.

People may sometimes refer to a double personality —an acute case of Jekyll and Hyde—but on a moment's reflection it becomes clear that in such a case the word is only used in a derivative and metaphorical sense. As persons are known to their fellows by the sum of those characteristics, by which they are perceptibly distinct from their neighbours, their characteristics and qualities are sometimes roughly referred to as their *personality*. The whole tragedy of Jekyll and Hyde lies precisely in the fact that Jekyll and Hyde are really one and the same person, though there were two sets of characteristics of a man—that of a sedate and respectable doctor and that of a criminal debauchee.

The first and radical meaning of person is that incommunicable something by which I am I and you are you. That is not our nature, for we have that in common, but another factor in reality, by which intelligent beings are individualized.

The concept of personality is such a primary one,

that it is difficult to find another term for it, or to describe it in other words. Such is the case with all primary ideas. A person might be described as "an individual with an intelligent nature." Dogs and plants and stones are not persons, because they do not think. That which makes a rational nature numerically one, indivisible and uncommunicable, makes it a person.

When such primary concepts are long meditated upon and deeply studied a number of difficult philosophical problems arise, but these do not concern us now; they have no immediate and necessary bearing on the dogma of the Incarnation; they deal with the how and the why of the distinction between nature and person, not with the fact of the distinction itself.

Even the man in the street, John Jones, innocent of all philosophy, would say: "I am I, *not* because I am a man, for there are other men besides myself, *but* because, being a man, I am John." An ordinary man applies these primary notions readily to the mystery of the Incarnation. He would say to himself: "If I could meet Our Blessed Lord and ask Him the question: "Who are you?" Our Blessed Lord would answer: "I am God the Son made man for you"; and I would sink upon my knees and adore, saying: "My Lord and my God!" If I could ask Him again: "What, then, is this human form I see before me, is it a vision, a phantom, a mere veil thrown over the glory of Your Godhead?" He would answer: "No, for even that is also I myself, for, being eternally God, I have become man, and this nature is my own. I am man like you, with flesh and blood, with body and soul, though I have not ceased to be the Son, who is with the

Father and the Spirit, I who am God, world without end." Then would the simple man, in loving adoration, gaze upon the human face of the Only-begotten of the Father and again say: "O my Lord and my God!"

Such is the act of faith easily elicited by the minds of the learned and the simple, natural to children as well as to the aged, independent of the knowledge of any system of philosophy. Such is the act of faith demanded by the Council of Chalcedon. It is the fashion in these days of Modernist congresses to reject Chalcedon as unintelligible. The modern man, they say, understands it no longer, he no longer thinks in Greek categories. The static philosophy of Hellas has become impossible to him. Aristotelianism no longer evokes a mental response in his thoughts. The doctrine must be reinterpreted in the terms of modern thought.

All this is at best only a pose. The gentlemen who speak at Modernist congresses know perfectly well what Chalcedon meant. This is obvious from the fact that they possess at least average intelligence, and that it cannot be so difficult to ascertain what Chalcedon meant in A.D. 451

Without even going to historical works accessible to all it can be ascertained by living intercourse with thousands of people in their own immediate surroundings. To represent Christian faith as some antediluvian antiquity, the dark meaning of which can only be grasped by a thorough study of Aristotelian philosophy, is such a transparent make-believe that it would not deceive a child. If these gentlemen really doubt, let them turn into a catechism class of a neighbouring Catholic Church and learn from children between

twelve and fourteen. Perhaps they need not go so far ; their own domestic servant may be able to teach them, if she is "a Roman," that is, if she is one of those hundreds of millions who still believe in the teacher who taught at Chalcedon, when "Peter spoke by the mouth of Leo." The teaching of Catholicism is as clear as noonday, but Modernists, understanding it only too well, deliberately deny it, because their minds refuse to bend to the acceptance of a mystery.

For a mystery the Incarnation will always remain. How one single person can possess two natures, leaving those natures complete and unchanged and yet holding them both in the unity of his single personality, how the infinite God, remaining immutable, infinite, eternal, can in time assume a created human nature, with mind and body, heart and soul as His very own, so that Jesus Christ is true man and true God, how all this is possible no one on earth during his mortal life can know.

On earth we only know of the union of one person with one nature, for nature and person together constitute the only individuals we know. That one individual should possess two natures has no parallel on earth and is beyond all experience. It is utterly unique. That a finite and created individual could possess two natures may well be doubted, but we are dealing with an infinite, eternal, uncreated person, and that He could assume another nature unto Himself, who can gainsay ? But how it can be done and the manner of the union is beyond our understanding.

Modernists have said that modern people express personality in terms of consciousness, and they require that the dogma of the two natures in one person in Christ shall be expressed in these terms.

§3. *How to express personality in terms of consciousness.*

What is meant by expressing personality in the terms of consciousness ?

Does it mean that a person is only a stream of consciousness, or an ever-continuing series of states of self-awareness ? If so, the doctrine cannot be expressed in its terms, for the statement is untrue, and no dogma can be expressed in the terms of an untruth.

A person is *someone who* is conscious, or carried on a stream of consciousness, who passes through an ever-continuing series of self-awareness. He is not that stream, or that series of states itself. He is not his own acts, but he is the agent of his own acts. Consciousness involves thought-processes, and these are impossible without a thinking subject, without some one who thinks. I am not the mere succession of my own acts or states, I am that stable principle that underlies my acts, I am one and the same who continue under the ceaseless flux of my own thoughts and activities. Unless something remained under the ceaseless change of my mental and vital phenomena, if indeed there were change only, and nothing more, there would be no unity. But there is unity, for I am one, and not two or three. Even if some other man has the exactly same series of experiences as I, that would not make me him, or him me, for I am I, not he, because the content of consciousness is changed by the personal equation.

There is a story we were told when we were children and which made the walls of the nursery ring with laughter. The awful story of the twins, so like one another, that they asked their mother to bind a blue ribbon round the wrist of the one and a red one round the wrist of the other that they might remember who

they were. Once in a scuffle, the ribbon got torn off and each of the poor things had to grow up in the continual doubt whether he was he or his brother, and when one of them died, the survivor never knew whether he was dead or his brother.

As a bit of laughable nonsense in early childhood the story had its place, but has it come to trouble the schools of philosophy in the twentieth century?

I am not merely conscious, but I am self-conscious; I know my successive acts and states not merely as acts and states, and as successive but as *mine*. In my actions I know myself as agent, by an immediate and intuitive assertion of self. I am the principle from which the actions emanate as their source, in whom the actions are immanent, for whom they are done and into whom they return, for I know myself a person, and therefore I am responsible for my acts. No mere series of states, any more than a row of pins, can be responsible for being a series or for having a particular state within the series. To connect responsibility with a series, a row, a sequence, or a succession, is utter unreason. I cannot change any of these words into responsible units by writing their initial letter with a capital. Responsibility demands a focus of all actions, a centre to whom I can attribute them, it demands an individual intelligence, it demands a person, a being, subsisting within and by himself, and intrinsically distinct from all beings whatever. To deny this is not philosophy, it is the negation of obvious experience. The task of philosophy is not to deny facts but to explain them, to analyse, harmonise and systematise them.

Psychology must explain the facts of experience, the

data of consciousness, and not begin by declaring the fundamental facts of experience and consciousness mere illusions to which no objective existence corresponds.

What then is meant by explaining the Incarnation in modern terms of consciousness ?

Consciousness is a function or an activity of a person. Introspection teaches us that awareness is always personal. It teaches us that consciousness is always by itself and in itself and split off from the great ocean of consciousness, if there be such an ocean. It is a thought-process, and the object of this process is the simultaneous understanding of one's own actions and one's own self, manifesting itself in those actions. In man this knowledge is human knowledge, *i.e.*, it is a limited, finite, created human act, grasping or perceiving the reality of self and its modifications. In God this knowledge is an infinite, unlimited uncreated act of intelligence which is God Himself, for in God the subject and object of intelligence, the knower and the known, are the same. The mere human act of self-consciousness is only a faint analogy to the infinite act of God's self-knowledge for in man it is a vital experience limited by sensation, imagination and perception. Now in Christ there is but one person, in whom two natures are united. Therefore there is in Christ one single "Some one" who both understands Himself as God the Son by his infinite act of divine intelligence and who understands Himself as man by a finite act of human self-consciousness.

Therefore in Christ there are two acts of self-consciousness, as likewise all other acts of Christ are two-fold, for there are two operations in Christ—the divine and the human. On the other hand we must not

forget that self-consciousness is a phrase rather improperly used of both God and man, as the acts are only analogous to one other, the act of infinite intelligence and the act of human knowledge.

Moreover, the infinite act of God's self-knowledge has as object not merely His Godhead considered in the abstract. In his Godhead He sees likewise all that He has made, inclusive therefore of the human nature which He has assumed. His human acts therefore are included in His divine act of self-consciousness, and He knows them as His own, performed by Him in His own human nature. So, *vice versa*, the self-consciousness of Christ, as man, includes a human knowledge of God. This is obvious, for self-consciousness in Christ means knowledge of Himself, but He is God. This act of knowledge is limited, created, and therefore it is not encompassing or comprehending the Godhead which is impossible for a finite faculty. It is a direct apprehension of the fact that his personality is the Second Person of the Trinity and it involves of necessity what is called the Beatific Vision, or the direct though connatural apprehension, without any intermediary whatever of the divine nature.

All speculations therefore when and how Christ developed the consciousness of His divine nature, by what steps and gradations He became aware that He was the Son of God, by what process He became slowly aware of the divine side of His being, His unique Sonship and Messiahship, all such speculations which have darkened non-catholic theology for the last fifty years, are based on a total misunderstanding of the truth of the Incarnation.

Christ knew who He was. A man who does not

know who he is, is without the use of his reason and lacks the fulness of his manhood. To search the Gospels for some indications when it dawned on the mind of the boy or the young man at Nazareth that he stood in a unique relation to God, is an idle search. One's own identity does not dawn upon one.

The suggestion that Christ learnt something for the first time about Himself either at His baptism in the Jordan, or on the mount of the Transfiguration when He heard : " This is my dearly beloved Son," is an impossible suggestion, for no one can learn from an external voice his own identity, if he does not know it already. Christ did not need some subsequent revelation, telling Him who He was : that truth was connatural to His human mind, for it was the human mind of God ; that truth was given in the fact of the Hypostatic Union, that is, in the fact that the two natures were owned by One Person only, the Person of God the Son.

All modern disquisitions on the question how and when Christ ascertained the divinity of His nature are all tacitly based on the assumption that Christ and God are TWO and not ONE ; in other words, on the assumption that the Incarnation is not really true and that God never became man. It means the tacit substitution of a totally different idea instead of that of the Christian faith.

On the most favourable interpretation the question betrays a strange confusion of ideas. Christ had no divine side to His nature. His human nature was human, completely, fully and only human. His divine nature was God. Neither His human nor His divine nature is a compound of humanity and

divinity. Neither nature has "another side" to it. There are two natures, which are, as natures, totally distinct but there is one single person which actuates, or holds, or possesses both natures, and gives them being.

§4. *The belief in Christ's divinity does not lessen belief in His humanity.*

The plea has been entered that such a belief concerning Christ takes away all real humanity of Our Lord. If Our Lord really knew during the whole of His life on earth that He was really God, His human life was a make-believe, it was utterly unlike ours and can in no way be an example to us. We should in no way understand Him, and He would seem to us a monstrous amalgam of divinity and humanity.

This plea fails on many counts. First, because it overlooks the fact that the Incarnation is a mystery, and that in consequence any hope to comprehend it in its fulness is for us on earth out of the question. We understand the terms in which it has been revealed, we fully understand the truth as enunciated, we know the fact, but how the fact takes place we know not. It is this impatience at being unable to fathom the mystery which leads people to scorn it as something incongruous and absurd.

Secondly, people are led in these matters more by their imagination than by their understanding. Their inability to picture to themselves the state of Christ's soul leads them to deny what they cannot imagine. Lastly, the plea betrays a confusion of thought. The incongruity of a man knowing himself God is removed if we state the truth clearly. It is God, who in His

human nature knows that He is man. Christ is not *a* man in the sense of being a man only, for this would imply a separate, distinct human personality, but Christ has no personality, other than the personality of God the Son. We never say that *a* man became God, but that God became man. Christ's nature was truly human, His mind, His will, His memory, His senses, His body, all were really, truly human, and there is no amalgam whatever in Christ's human nature itself, though this nature is placed and maintained in its individual reality by the Person of God the Son.

Modernists refer us to the Gospels and maintain that Christ there betrays purely human consciousness. This they say must be our starting point, however divine Christ may have either been or have become. They misunderstand the issue. That Christ had purely human consciousness is obvious, and granted on all hands, how could Christ be man unless He had purely human consciousness ? But this manhood was God's own manhood, which He had assumed unto Himself that He might be man and dwell amongst us.

Modernists imagine that if Christ was really God there must have mingled in the stream of consciousness of His mind the mighty stream of His consciousness as God. But this is not so. If the metaphor may be followed : Those two streams do not mingle, but they come from the same source, and they both know the source whence they come, they both belong to the same personality. If we start with Christ as a man with a human personality and then superimpose on this man some divine consciousness, we come to the gross folly of imagining Christ as a human being, who knows that he is a human person, and yet has it at the back of his

head all the time that He is God also. Obviously this monstrous travesty of the truth repels. When, however, we start from the truth that Christ is God, it is seen to be imperative that even in His human nature He must have known who He was.

This knowledge we ourselves cannot reconcile with ordinary manhood, in the sense that we have no experience of any manhood that is not subsisting in a mere human personality, and we cannot either imagine or understand *how* such knowledge would affect a human soul. But we are most emphatically able to understand that there is nothing intrinsically impossible in such a union of two natures in one person, and that the knowledge of His divine Personality is not irreconcilable with the knowledge of His human nature. If we said that Christ knew He was man and at the same time knew that he was not really man but God, this would be an intolerable self-contradiction. When, however, we say that Christ knew that He was man, but also knew that His manhood did not ultimately subsist in a human self, but in a Divine Person, we are indeed speaking in mysteries but not in contradictions, and we in no way lessen the truth and completeness of that manhood.

To assert that if Christ knew His own Godhead, He could be no example to us men is a grotesque denial of history. The Christ of Chalcedon, as modern jargon would express it, the Christ of Chalcedon, has as a matter of fact, been the pattern and example of myriads of men and women for fourteen centuries before the modern denial of Chalcedon arose. The saints of old were in no way hindered, but in every way helped and stimulated, by the thought that Jesus was both true

God and true man, that in imitating Jesus they were not imitating a mere man, however holy, but the infinite perfection of God Himself in human nature. If then modern man says that the Christ of Chalcedon can no longer be an example to him, he thereby confesses either his ignorance of who the Christ of Chalcedon is, or a strange perversion in his own mentality in rejecting the perfect manhood, which God the Son assumed as His own.

§5. *The definition of Chalcedon unalterable for all time.*

Was Chalcedon indeed a failure ?

Amongst Modernists it is accepted as an axiom that Chalcedon was a failure. It explained nothing. It was a confession of bankruptcy. It has been a hindrance to development of Christological thought for 1400 years. "All things develop," they say, "and are subject to evolution ; a statement made 1400 years ago does not satisfy us. We understand more about personality now than we did in the days of Static Aristotelianism. We now have a dynamic conception of this Universe, inclusive of man, we must restate the dogma in terms intelligible to us to-day," and so on ; the changes are rung in a thousand ways.

Now every definition of a revealed truth must in a sense be a confession of bankruptcy. The whole reason for revelation is the insufficiency of the human mind. If the human mind were completely competent to ascertain the truth revealed, divine revelation would be an idle and foolish process. The only reason why an Infinite Intelligence should reveal some fact to a finite created Intelligence would not, or could not, have ascertained it of itself.

Even we men amongst ourselves regard it as an empty procedure to tell our fellows what they know already. The giving of information is normally based on the conviction of the ignorance of the party informed. Everyone who accepts information of another confesses bankruptcy, for one is not informed of a thing that is self-evident, but of a thing confessedly unknown.

True, the infinite Intelligence communicating with a finite one may do so, although the finite intelligence left to itself might under certain circumstances and after a series of efforts have obtained the information for itself. It may simply anticipate the acquisition of knowledge, or through revelation make it accessible to the bulk of men, who otherwise would not have ascertained it as a matter of fact.

But the Infinite Intelligence may also communicate truths which a finite intelligence could never have ascertained by its unaided efforts, and which even after revelation remain beyond man's comprehension. In other words, the meaning of the statement itself may be grasped, and the fact itself lie revealed, but *how* or *why* the fact is cannot be understood. Even with regard to merely natural truths there are numberless facts, which we acknowledge as true, but how and why they are true completely escapes our understanding. Indeed, there is an old saying: *Omnia exeunt in mysterium:* All question send in a question! Now definitions of the Church are the correct statement of the thing revealed. They are in no way explanations. In that sense Chalcedon was a triumph for all time. Chalcedon was a confession of bankruptcy, precisely because it was the correct statement of a mystery.

The Incarnation is the union of two terms, of which one is infinite, the other finite. No union can be fully understood except by understanding *both* its terms and seeing in the terms themselves the reason of their mutual relation. Therefore, to explain the Incarnation to a finite intelligence is a manifest impossibility. Any one who foolishly claims to give a complete explanation of the Incarnation cannot but begin by stating it inaccurately ; for, if stated accurately, it is of necessity inexplicable.

Chalcedon has created a presumption for its accuracy by the fact that after fourteen centuries of thought the mystery remains. To say that the mystery has remained only because of stagnation of thought ever since the fifth century is such a grotesque denial of history that one wonders how those that say it can do so without a burst of laughter.

Must we then apply to the Incarnation the famous saying : *Credo quia impossible*—I believe it because it is impossible ? No, certainly not. The case of Christ is indeed unique, it is completely beyond the field of our experience, but it remains within the limits of the possible. Christ's human nature in the very first moment of its existence received the individual subsistence, the Personality of the Word, which was from all eternity. This is not impossible.

Modernists beg us to be satisfied with a statement either that God was in Christ, or that Christ is the Supreme Manifestation of God. Both expressions can, of course, be understood in a true sense. But they hide an ambiguity, and they are deliberately chosen that they may shelter an interpretation which is untrue.

God was not *in* Christ, for God cannot be contained in

anything, considering He is infinite. Christ is God, for He is a divine Person having a human nature.

Christ is not the Supreme *manifestation* of God. Christ's Person is not a manifestation of God at all. He is God Himself. Christ's human nature is on the one hand no *supreme* manifestation, for there can be no supreme manifestation of the Infinite except within the Trinity to Himself. On the other hand, the historic manifestation of God in Christ is not supreme, for it is not one in a series of like manifestations at all.

The root error of to-day is the illusion that the Incarnation can be explained so as to leave no residue of mystery. The effort to understand it always better, to search and to crave for more light is not only natural, but laudable and fruitful of great religious benefits. It is a noble thing, befitting a man and a Christian. On the other hand, to live in the feverish hope to encompass it all, and understand it through and through, is like the effort of the child running fast in hope that he may catch the ends of the rainbow. There is no bar to progress in reflecting on the mystery, but the first postulate for progress is to start from a definite point. Even Prof. Mayor warns Anglican traditionalists that they may "prohibit practically all theological development or leave it to Rome." Rome evidently does not shrink from theological development. This is based on the fact that she starts with a given, an unalterable statement of the doctrine. Without authoritative statement as to what is really revealed, no study of revelation can begin.

CHAPTER II

CHRIST'S DIVINITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

§1. *Nature of the Proof for Christ's Divinity.*
§2. *Absence of categorical and technical statement in the Gospels.*
§3. *Divinity implied in Christ's way of speaking.*
§4. *Divinity implied in Christ's way of working miracles.*
§5. *Divinity implied in Christ's claims for Himself.*
§6. *Christ's direct claim to equality with God.*
§7. *Christ's death for the claim to divinity.*
§8. *The Testimony of the Apostles after the Resurrection.*

§1. *The Nature of the proof for Christ's divinity.*

It is obvious to everyone that a direct proof in the sense of a demonstration from cause to effect, or

Note.—In this Chapter we shall throughout consider the Gospel of St. John of fully the same authority as the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke, and this not only because all four Gospels are equally inspired, but because the recent attempt at differentiation in historical value between the three synoptics and the Fourth Gospel is the outcome of dogmatic prejudice and not of scientific criticism. As historians we should not be influenced by the modern sectarian bias against the authority of the Fourth Gospel. The present vogue against its trustworthiness is only a passing phase, and sobriety of judgment is sure to return before long. We cannot in this book prove the veracity of the Fourth Evangelist; this must be proven elsewhere. The reader might consult two books by the present author: *The Gospels, Fact, Myth or Legend?* and *Prophets, Priests and Publicans.*

effect to cause, is impossible in the case of the divinity of Christ. The union of the two natures in one person is clearly in itself incapable of demonstration, as it cannot be the object of human experience. It is plain that all that can be done is to prove that Christ claimed to be God and that right reason leads us to accept that claim. The acceptance of any claim must rest on our acknowledgment of the veracity and trustworthiness of the claimant.

However overwhelmingly great the claim to divinity may be, it must rest on the same reasonable grounds. In the full rigour of the term we cannot prove the divinity of Christ in itself, but we can prove that Christ claimed divinity and that rational man ought to believe that claim, so that if he rejects it he stands responsible before his Creator for abusing his reason. The proof of the truth of Christ's claim lies, then, along four lines.

(1) The first consists in the mental and moral perfection of the Speaker who made the claim.

(2) The second consists in the mighty miracles which He wrought in endorsement of His claim. These miracles are such that they involve a divine approbation of the claim of Christ.

(3) The third consists in the sublimity of the revelation which Christ came to bring. This revelation could indeed have been brought by a mere messenger who was not God; but, given the divine origin of the message conveyed, there follows the trustworthiness of the claim made by the messenger concerning Himself.

(4) The last consists in the supernatural character of the Church Christ founded. The Church is the greatest organisation for holiness and virtue ever known

to the human race. It is based on the acceptance of Christ's claim to be God. If that claim were false, the most divine thing on earth would be the fruit of a lie. This is impossible, therefore the claim is true.

Modern deniers of Christ's divinity realize that it would be in the highest degree impolitic to impugn the subjective veracity of Christ. They therefore suggest that, though sincere, He might be mistaken, or more frequently they maintain that He never laid claim to divinity at all.

The first suggestion, that Christ, though sincere, might be mistaken, is felt by most to be a somewhat feeble attack. A person who claims to be God and is mistaken in his claim, is clearly insane. Now, no one, as far as I know, has dared directly to suggest that Jesus of Nazareth was not sane. There are limits to human audacity and limits also to human credulity; the suggestion that the Founder of Christianity was really a madman, who fancied himself God, transgresses those limits. When modern unbelievers therefore suggest that Jesus of Nazareth, though sincere, might be mistaken, they do not include in his supposed mistakes a claim to divinity.

They only use the suggestion as an indirect argument for if Christ was subject to error of any kind, he was certainly not God, for God cannot err.

There remains then, practically, only the one possible position for those who deny Christ's divinity: Christ was a good, holy and wise man, who taught sublime moral doctrines, but who never dreamt of claiming any divinity for himself. This was only gradually attributed to him after his death by over-fond disciples.

Against this modern position Catholics have the task of proving that Christ did indeed claim to be the Son of God in the sense that He shares the divine nature of His heavenly Father and is truly God with the Father and the Holy Ghost. They have the task to show that the acceptance of Christ's divinity was not a slow and gradual process, completed only by those who were distant from Christ by many generations, but that His divinity was believed and proclaimed by those who were of His own generation and who could best judge of the validity of His claim.

They have the task, finally, to show that belief in Christ's divinity always has been and now is of the essence of Christianity and the source of its innermost vitality, and that the rejection of this claim means the rejection of Christianity as the greatest imposture the world has known. Such rejection of Christianity is in absurd contradiction to the history of the world.

§2. *The Absence of a Technical Statement in the Gospels.*

Now, it has been a matter of surprise to some that the Four Gospels nowhere contain a simple, direct and categorical statement of Christ that He is God. There are readers of the Gospels who would almost expect the clear and bold assertion from Christ's lips: "I am God!" and there are some who triumphantly point out that though the disciples after His death may have called Him God, He himself never did so.

This surprise is born of a lack of understanding. The purpose of the Incarnation was not the glorification of Christ on earth, but the Redemption of man. Christ came to atone for our sins. Christ came to give a divine revelation from His Father Almighty, Christ

came to give us an example of perfect manhood. Christ came to institute the means of grace in the Church which He founded. Christ did not come that during His human life upon earth He should receive divine homage. If, during His stay in this world, His divinity had been fully acknowledged and realized, one does not see how His gracious purpose could have been carried out.

The whole Gospel story is against the supposition that Christ during His earthly life required the acknowledgment and realization of His Godhead from all His disciples. He was born in a stable, He taught His people and worked miracles during three years and some months at the most, and then He was crucified. Surely in the story of this life it would be incongruous to demand that Christ during the whole or even during His public ministry should perpetually proclaim to all and sundry: "I am God. Adore Me!"

Having the course of centuries before Him, He was not anxious that during a year or some months of His mortal life, previous to His Resurrection, He should be surrounded by kneeling crowds offering Him divine adoration. He knew that countless generations were to come, who were to adore His Godhead, and God knows of no hurry in carrying out His plans. Without uttering the disconcerting claim to unprepared minds: "I am God," He was, as a perfect teacher, leading people to draw, themselves, the conclusion which He wished they should draw. He so spoke, He so behaved, He worked such miracles, that soon in His surroundings people said to one another: "Who is this, for the winds and the sea obey Him? He speaks as never man spoke before." During the three years of His mortal

life He so led His disciples from truth to truth, that after His Resurrection and after His sending the Holy Ghost from above, these disciples acknowledged Him as God, and His followers throughout the world these two thousand years adored Him as the Only-begotten of the Father, one with Him in nature, glory and divinity. He carried out His purpose with infinite wisdom and in accordance with His own plans for our redemption, and in accordance with the frailty of our human nature.

Those people who marvel that He did not forthwith proclaim Himself God to His astonished apostles unconsciously betray their own childish conceptions. Amongst us men, when someone is higher in dignity than at first sight he seems to be, he is in perpetual restlessness till the fact of his hidden greatness becomes known. Hungry for the homage of others, such a person is liable to anticipate the time of his due self-revelation by hinting at his true station. Human frailty may find it difficult to remain incognito for a day. God, clothed in the lowly vesture of human nature, can afford to wait, till, through the workings of His grace, men of goodwill gradually, and without abnormal and catastrophic mental disturbance, come to realize His divine personality.

§3. *Divinity implied in Christ's way of speaking.*

Christ spoke as only God would speak. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ said to the people: " Ye have heard how it was said to those of old : Thou shalt not kill. . . Ye have heard how it was said to those of old : Thou shalt not commit adultery. . . Ye have heard how it was said to those of old : Thou shalt

not forswear thyself. . . Ye have heard how it was said : An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. . . Ye have heard that it was said : Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy . . ." And then, after each of those references to the Old Law, Christ added, " But I say unto you." Thus He opposed His own personal authority to the authority of the Author of the Old Covenant. The first three quotations are direct from the Decalogue, which God Himself thundered from the height of Mount Sinai ; the two following claimed likewise the authority of God, as being the Law which He gave to Moses. Christ does not comment on them as a rabbi would. He does not merely explain or enlarge them as a prophet might, claiming inspiration from God. Christ does not use the ancient formula : "thus saith the Lord" or "the word of the Lord by the mouth of the prophet." No ! His comment is : "But I say unto you." The Gospel text makes it perfectly clear that the emphasis was on the personal pronoun "I." The stress on His personal authority, as ultimate and divine, recurs again and again in the same sermon on the Mount. Read carefully the following : " Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven : but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Thy name, and by Thy name cast out devils and by Thy name do many mighty works ? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you : depart from me ye that work iniquity. Everyone therefore that heareth these words of mine and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock . . . everyone that

heareth these words of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. . ."

Not only here, but throughout the Gospels, we are never allowed to forget that He who speaks could say: "Amen, Amen, I say unto you: heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away." In fact, as the prophets of the past spoke in the name of God, so the prophets of the future were to speak in the name of Christ. This would be blasphemy unless Christ is God. Open any part of the Old Testament and compare it with a page of the Gospels. The prophets spoke as messengers in someone else's stead, Christ speaks in His own name, as if He himself possessed the plenitude of divine authority, as if the Father's authority and His were identical.

No wonder that the Jews were amazed and said: "He speaks as no one has spoken before," and His enemies objected: "Thou, being a man makest Thyself God." Without making the direct statement: "I am God," Christ spoke in such a fashion that His hearers one and all realized that He took for granted such a relation between Himself and God, that, at least in some sense, God and He were the same.

§4. *Divinity implied in Christ's way of working miracles.*

When we consider His miracles we reach the same conclusion. Others have worked miracles before and after Christ, but Christ worked them by His own power. The leper came to Him and saith: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." He answered: "I will, be thou made clean." In fact He demanded faith in

Himself from those for whom He worked His miracles. Two blind men followed Him, crying out, "Have mercy on us, thou Son of David," and Jesus saith to them, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" They say unto Him, "Yea, Lord." Then touched He their eyes, saying, "According to your faith, be it done unto you." The centurion, who pleaded for his servant said: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof, but only say the word and my servant shall be healed." Jesus said unto him: "Go thy way; as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee."

The father of the boy with the deaf and dumb spirit said to Jesus: "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." But Jesus replied indignantly: "If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth." Straightway the father of the child cried out and said: "I believe; help Thou my unbelief!" Then Jesus healed the child. It is abundantly clear that Christ demanded faith, not in the omnipotence of the God of Israel, but He demanded faith *in Himself*, as if all power was deposited in Him, and the miracle was the work of His own will. Amongst all the marvels done by Saints and prophets, Christ's miracles stand out in this, that there is in them no appeal to a power outside Himself. It is not through prayer, that might be heard or refused; not as asking a favour, that He obtains this power, but He possesses it by right, and He demands from others faith in Himself. The storm on the lake begins while Christ is asleep in the boat. The disciples awake Him and cry for help. He rebukes them: "O ye of little faith." He said to the storm: "Be still," and there was a

great calm, and the disciples said : " Who is this, that the winds and the sea obey Him ?"

By acting as only God would act Christ led His own generation on to the gradual realization of His own personality, though it was in accordance with His plans that His followers should not come to the complete understanding of the mystery till He had risen from the dead and sent down the Spirit of Truth from heaven.

While thus teaching and working miracles He gradually unveiled His personality. He declared Himself greater than Solomon, than Jonas, than David. Yea, Abraham had hoped to see His day ; he saw it and was glad. Christ declared that He was Lord of the Sabbath, that He was the Expected One, described by Isaias the Prophet, whose name is Emmanuel, God with us ; that John the Baptist was His forerunner, of whom it was foretold centuries in the past : " Behold I send my messenger before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee." Christ claimed to be the judge of the living and the dead, and that all creation shall pass before His throne. The final sentence of eternal doom to the wicked shall be : " Go away *from Me*, ye cursed." To go away from Him was the same as to go away from God into everlasting darkness. He was the Son of God in some utterly unique sense. " All things," so He says, " have been delivered unto me of my Father ; and no one knoweth the Son except the Father, neither doth any one know the Father save the Son and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal him." When Peter, in answer to the question : " Who do men say that I am ?" after enumerating the errors of others, says: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the

living God," Christ praises him with exuberant praise : " Blessed art thou, Simon bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto thee, but my Father, who is in heaven." The mere fact of Christ's Messiahship might easily be inferred from the fulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament, but Peter had added : " the Son of the living God," and this could only be due to some direct miraculous knowledge given to him by the Father, who alone knoweth the Son.

§5. *Christ's claim to forgive sins.*

Christ claimed a power which above all other powers is necessarily and intrinsically divine, the power of forgiving sins. For one creature to claim by his own power to forgive another creature's sin would be an idle and blasphemous usurpation, for sin is essentially an offence against the Creator, not merely an offence against a fellow creature. Only the person offended can forgive. Yet Christ forgives in such a way that it is plain that it is completely His own act. Hostile bystanders exclaim : " Who can forgive sins but God alone? " Christ does not deny the assertion, but proves by a miracle that He has the power to forgive sin, and then leaves them to their own conclusion.

Nay, more, Christ forgives in response to love towards Himself, so that love towards Himself is the very measure of the sinner's title to forgiveness. The Magdalen is forgiven much "because she loved much." The Pharisee received less because he loved Christ less. Unless Christ be God this would be a formal usurpation of a divine prerogative, meriting the punishment of Lucifer, who was cast headlong out of heaven for striving to be like unto God.

Christ claims, and His followers proclaim, that He possesses a unique prerogative unknown to any other man—He claims sinlessness. " Go away from me, Lord, for I am but a sinful man," cried St. Peter, contrasting his own mere humanity with the holiness of Christ. " Who of you shall convince me of sin," said Christ to His foes. Christ forgives sin, but He Himself never asks forgiveness or even betrays any fear for his own human frailty, as if sin and Himself had nothing in common, so that those that believed in Him said : " He became like unto us in all things except in sin."

He, the sinless One, sets Himself up as the model of manhood and the refuge of men. " Learn of me." " Come to me, ye who are laden and heavily burdened, and I shall give you rest." Nay, more, His followers must love Him above all things. " If any one love father or mother, wife or child, more than Me, he is not worthy of Me." To the man who asked delay to bury his father He answered, "Let the dead bury their dead, do thou come and follow Me." To the rich young man : " If you wilt be perfect, sell whatever thou hast and give it to the poor and follow Me !" " He that confesses Me before men I shall confess him before My Father, who is in heaven. He that denies Me before men, I shall deny him before my Father, who is in heaven." The salvation of mankind is entirely bound up with Him ; there is no hope for men but in Him. In the day of judgment He will give to everyone according to his works.

Thus did Christ lead His followers on to ever deeper understanding of Himself, though some were more sluggish of mind than others. Philip asked, the evening before Christ died: " Lord, show us the

Father and it sufficeth us." Jesus said unto him: "Have I been so long a time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father: how sayest thou then, show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me?"

Sometimes Christ directly suggested an act of faith in Himself and accepted worship. The man, born blind, who was cured by Christ, was met by Christ after he was cast out of the synagogue and Christ said: "Dost thou believe in the Son of Man?" He answered and said: "And who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said unto him, "Thou hast both seen him and he it is that speaketh with thee." And he said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped him.

Twice we read that the Jews took up stones to stone Jesus when His words implied a claim to divinity. "Thou art not yet fifty years old," said they to Christ, "and hast thou seen Abraham?" Jesus said unto them "Amen, Amen, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am." Not: "I was," but "I am," for God lives in the everlasting present and knows of no past or future. Jesus re-echoed the word of God to Moses in the burning bush: "I am, that I am." The Jews understood, and attempted to inflict on Him death for blasphemy.

At another time when Christ said: "I and the Father are one," the Jews again took up stones to stone Him, saying: "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."

Jewry has never really forgotten Christ's claim. The Modernist idea that Christ merely claimed to be God's prophet and spokesman, or at most the Messias,

was unknown to the Jews of old. Jesus of Nazareth was put to death because he was a blasphemer, such is the tradition of Jewry, which has survived until this day.

Indeed Christ died upon the Cross for the claim He had made. The Sanhedrin condemned Him for blasphemy. The Sanhedrin condemned Him for the statement He made about Himself. "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said: "I am." The claim to mere Messiahship, however foolish and blameworthy, was not blasphemy in Jewish eyes, but Christ's claim went far beyond that. He identified Himself with "the Son of Man" spoken of in the Prophet Daniel. Now we read in Daniel vii that thrones were set in heaven for God and for this Son of Man.

Christ clearly implied in numberless sayings that His dignity was divine and He repeated it once more before the high priest: "Ye shall see the Son of man, sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven." Both expressions: *the Blessed*, and *the Power* are well-known Jewish terms for God, whose name Jews scrupulously avoided to pronounce.

Before Pontius Pilate, indeed, the Jews at first prefer a political charge of claiming to be a king, but soon their real grievance appears: "We have a law, and according to that law He has to die, because He made Himself the Son of God."

Christ's contemporaries were the best judges of the meaning of His words. They judged, and they judged well, that the divine sonship which Christ claimed necessarily involved blasphemy, if it were not true. Orthodox Jews of to-day have not changed. The

present writer, not long ago, spoke to a Jew from Poland, who bluntly and without any hesitation whatever said to him : " My people put your Christ to death, and they did well, for He made Himself God." The natural answer was given : " Yea, they did well, if He were not God."

Now, over and above those texts, which assert the divinity of Christ by implication there remain a number of statements which directly contain the assertion of His divinity.

" I confess to thee. O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones ! Yea, Father for so hath it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me by my Father. And no one knoweth the Son but the Father : neither doth any one know the Father but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal him. Come to me, all ye that labour and I will refresh you." (Matt. xi, 25-28).

If all is given by the Father to the Son, and if therefore Father and Son do alone interpenetrate one another by mutual knowledge, and if no one can know the Father except the Son reveal him, then, if Father is God, the Son is also, and the Son is Jesus Christ.

It is impossible to evade the assertion of infinite understanding and therefore infinite knowledge and divine equality with God the Father in this text.

Let us consider Christ's encounter with the Jews in Solomon's porch, told in John x, 24-39.

" My sheep," said Christ, " hear my voice and I know them and they follow me, and I give them life everlasting and they shall not perish for ever and no

man shall pluck them out of my hand. That which my Father hath given is greater than all things, and no one can snatch them out of the hand of my Father, I and the Father are one." The Jews then took up stones to stone him. Jesus answered them : " Many good works I have shown you from my Father, for which of these works do you stone me ?" The Jews answered him : " For a good work we stone thee not but for blasphemy; and because thou, being a man makest thyself God."

Here surely is the issue clearly stated. If Christ did not claim to be God, it was his supreme duty immediately with scorn to repudiate the blasphemous suggestion, and say : "I do not make myself God. That horrible accusation of the greatest crime a creature is capable of, the crime which would put him on a level with the lowest devil in hell, for Lucifer was hurled from heaven for claiming to be like unto God, that accusation I fling aside as an infamous, damnable lie!" And instead of this, what does Christ answer ? " Is it not written in your law : I said you are gods ?" If then he called them gods, to whom the word of God was spoken and the scripture cannot be broken ; do you say of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world : " Thou blasphemest because I said I am the Son of God ? If I do not the works of my Father believe me not, but if I do, though you will not believe me, believe my works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in the Father."

The Jews took this to be a reiteration of His claim, for we read : They sought therefore to take him ; but he escaped out of their hands.

Indeed, Christ in their eyes only intensified his

offence. He said that God was in Him and He in God, that the works of God were His own works, and His own works God's works ; that He was the Son of God in some higher way than the prophets of old could be called gods, because the word of God was spoken to them ; that God, His Father, had sanctified Him, as if the cry of the Thrice-Holy of the Seraphim was meant for Him as it was meant for God, his Father, who had sent Him into this world, He claims that He can give " life everlasting " to those that follow Him ; that they are utterly in His hand as they are in the hand of God His Father, for the Father gave Him what is greater than all things. Nothing indeed is greater than all things, except it be the Godhead, and therefore He said " I and the Father are one." If human words still have any meaning, the Speaker in Solomon's porch claimed equality with God, and when His foes taunted Him He repeated His claim. What Christ thus maintained amongst those that hated Him, He, the evening before He died, maintained amongst those that loved Him, yet understood Him so little.

Thus He spoke : " Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God believe also in me. I shall go and prepare a place for you, and I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you also may be And whither I go, you know, and the way you know." Thomas saith to him : " Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Jesus saith to him : " I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me. If you had known me, you would doubtless have known my Father also, and from henceforth you shall know him and you have seen him." Philip saith to him : " Lord shew us

the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus saith to him: "Have I been so long a time with you and have you not known me? Philip, he that seeth me, seeth the Father also. How sayest thou, shew us the Father! Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you, I speak not of myself. But the Father, who abideth in me, he doth the works. Believe you that I am in the Father and the Father in me? Otherwise believe for the very works sake!"

Surely, in the intimacy of his own friends the night before his death, Jesus did not deceive those whom He loved. But if Jesus was but a creature and the Father was God, could words have been chosen more cruelly deceiving than these? A disciple asks: "Show us God!" And Jesus answers: "Have I been so long a time with you, and have you not known me? He that seeth me, seeth God also!" How can this be unless Christ is God even as the Father is; only then does he that seeth Jesus see His Father also.

When finally Christ left this world and bade farewell to those whom He had chosen, He said: "To me is given all authority in heaven and upon earth, therefore go and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Could He have commanded them to baptize into the One Name of God and of two others, who were not God? Is not the inclusion of Himself with the Father under one Name the plainest assertion of His own divinity?

§7. *Christ's death for His claim to divinity.*

Finally there remains the unshakable historical truth

that Jesus of Nazareth died on the Cross, not for any particular point of His moral teaching, but exclusively for the claim which He set up concerning Himself. If there be any truth at all, it is this. Read all the Four Gospels, they are unanimous. If Christ did not die for supposed blasphemy—namely, for maintaining immediately before His death in presence of His judges that He was the Son of God, then the Gospels are valueless and we possess no written record of the life and death of Jesus at all. Let us take the text of St. Mark, who is supposed to represent the first and most original record of Christ's life. Many witnesses had been brought, but their testimony did not agree. Christ kept utter silence. "The high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee? But he held his peace and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and saith unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am, and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven. And the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What further need have we of witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy, what think ye? And they all condemned him to be worthy of death."

Now, there is no scholar who does not know that *The Blessed* and *The Power* were the common Jewish designation for God, there is no scholar who doubts that Christ refers to Daniel's prophecy, in which thrones (in the plural) are set in heaven, upon one of which the Ancient of Days, the eternal God, is seated, when One like a Son of Man is brought to Him to receive dominion and glory and a kingdom over all the nations. Christ

then claims to be God's own Son, destined to sit in his manhood by God's side on His throne on the clouds of heaven. Words cease to have meaning, if Christ's words do not mean that.

And so they were understood by those who purposely elicited them by their question and who first heard them with their own ears. By unanimous vote they condemned the speaker of blasphemy. The mere claim to be the Messias, however rash and absurd they may have thought it, was not blasphemy. Many before and after have claimed to be the Messias, but none were thought blasphemers. Bar Cochba, a hundred years later, was a claimant to Messiahship, and the bulk of the Jews accepted his claim. When he failed they called him a liar, not a blasphemer. Christ in their eyes had blasphemed. He claimed to be God's Son. But according to them God could have no son. To their ears it sounded horrid blasphemy that God should generate and have a Son, and beget a second god in heaven. To them it sounded blasphemy that any one should claim to sit with God on His throne on clouds of heaven, as if he were God's equal. That is why the high priest rent his garments, why there was no further need of any witnesses. That utterance ended the trial. They had all heard it, and they all condemned Him to death.

Next morning before Pontius Pilate they at first brought a number of accusations of a political character, Christ stirred up the people, He forbade to pay taxes, he made himself king, but when Pilate persisted in his endeavour to release him, and they thought he would slip through their hands, they bring the true accusation at last: "We have a law, and according to that law he

has to die because he made himself the Son of God!" Now when Pilate heard this saying he feared the more. Clearly Pilate grasped the meaning of the Jewish accusation well. To his superstitious pagan mind the claim to be a son of a god did not sound so incredible; there might be some divinity about this Galilean! His selfish dread of denunciation to the emperor finally overcame his religious scruples and he surrendered Christ to the Cross.

Christ then died because He claimed to be the Son of God, in the sense that He shared His nature and was His equal, who would sit with Him on His throne in heaven.

Now, Christ foretold both His death and His resurrection, and He kept His word. Having died on the Cross, He rose again from the dead on the third day, as He had foretold.

Hence we believe that He is what He said He was, the Son of God, who sitteth at the right hand of His Father Almighty. His tomb was thrown open, His body was gone, He rose from the dead and appeared to many; yea to as many as five hundred at once. He not only appeared to them, but He spoke with them, He let them touch and handle Him. He ate and drank with them, and for forty days moved amongst them, speaking to them concerning the kingdom of God.

Having risen from the dead, He has a right that men should believe Him to be what He claimed to be and for the claim of which He willingly underwent the torments of the Cross and the agony of death. Those that refuse to believe, sin against right reason, they sin against God and against His only-begotten Son.

The vague portrait of some saintly Dreamer in

Palestine, who taught sublime ethical principles of moral conduct, but was too humble to lay any claim to aught but simple manhood, is a childish caricature of the real Nazarene, a caricature inspired by a desire to avoid the acknowledgment of Christ's divinity without seeming to attack the moral rectitude of the Prophet of Galilee.

§8. *The testimony of the Apostles after the Resurrection.*

The disciples after Christ's Resurrection grasped the full import of Christ's words, and even Thomas sank upon his knees before his risen Master, saying: "Oh, My Lord and My God!"

If we turn from the Gospel record itself to the remainder of the New Testament, we find there the expression of the conviction of those who were best able to know what Jesus of Nazareth claimed, and who in very truth He was. No doubt the claims of Jesus were rejected by many of the Jews, but they were also accepted by many, the leaders of whom preached their faith throughout the world and sealed it with their blood, thus founding the Catholic Church, which remains with us to-day after nineteen hundred years.

St. John began his Gospel and summed up his faith in the words: "the Word was God . . . and the Word became flesh, and dwelt amongst us and we have seen His glory, as of the Only-begotten of the Father."

St. Peter, in the beginning of his first epistle, spoke of Christians as "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus Christ." To Peter therefore Father, Christ, and Spirit, were the One God, even as they are unto us.

St. Paul, closing the Second Epistle to the Corinthians wishes to all " the grace of Our Lord Jesus, the charity of God and the communication of the Holy Ghost," for, as he said, they had all " one body and one Spirit, one Lord and one faith, one God and Father " ; though they had " diversities of graces they had the same Spirit, diversities of ministries but the same Lord, diversities of operations but one God " ; " the Spirit Himself gave testimony that they were heirs indeed of God and joint-heirs of Christ," " for Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God and our Father " had loved them. To them indeed had " appeared the goodness of God our Saviour, who saved them through the renovation of the Holy Ghost, who was poured out through Jesus Christ Our Saviour." To St. Paul therefore Father, Christ, and Spirit were the One God, even as they are to us. And what wonder, for Christ Himself, according to St. Matthew's Gospel, had sent the Apostles to baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Now, it would be folly to think that Christ sent His apostles to baptise into the one name of God and of two other persons, who were not God. The words of baptism would be a blasphemous formula unless Father, Son and Spirit were the One God ; no one has doubted, or could doubt, that by the Son is meant Jesus Christ Our Lord.

Jude the Apostle, the brother of James, writes against those who " turned the grace of our God into riotousness, and denied the only Sovereign and Lord of us, Jesus Christ," and he reminds his hearers that " Jesus, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, destroyed them that believed not, and the angels who kept not their principality, He reserved

unto the judgment of the great day." To St. Jude therefore Jesus is the God of the Old Testament, who brought the Jews out of bondage and who is the God of the Angels who fell in the beginning of time.

Who then are the men of to-day who claim to understand the mind of Jesus better than His disciples Peter, John, Thomas, Matthew, Jude and Paul?

In recent years the attempt has been made to prove that when the Apostles called Christ *Kyrios*, "Lord," this title should not be understood as strictly connected with divinity.

The fact, however, remains that in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was the Book which outside Palestine was the only Bible people could understand, *Kyrios* is the ordinary rendering for Jehovah, and that for Jews in Palestine *Adonai*, which means "Lord," was likewise the normal name for the God of Israel. Even in our English versions, "the Lord," when used in the Old Testament, simply means God. It is unnatural therefore to suppose that when the Apostles and early Christians spoke of Jesus as "the Lord" they did not really mean to ascribe divinity to Him. In Pagan circles they spoke of *Kyrios* Serapis, the god Serapis, and if even the Roman emperors were called *Kyrioi*, "Lords," we must not forget that those were the times of emperor-worship, when every Greek city almost had a temple to Rome and the emperor. Emperors were said to become gods after their deaths. Well-known is the contemptuous remark of the dying emperor, who said of himself: "Oh, I am becoming a god," *deus fio*. What Jehovah was to the Jew of the Old Testament, that Jesus was to the Christian. In the Acts of the Apostles the word *Kyrios* occurs some one hundred and ten

times. In a third of them it refers unmistakably to God, in a third directly to Jesus, in a last third it refers to God or to Jesus Christ. The term is clearly used indiscriminately of God and of Jesus. Again and again it is impossible to decide whether " the Lord " refers to God or to Jesus, or to both, so imperceptibly does the discourse pass from one to the other, so closely identified is the Lord Jesus with the Lord God. As Christ on Calvary had said : " Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," so St. Stephen when dying said : " Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," " Lord Jesus lay not this sin to their charge." What Jesus said to God His Father, St. Stephen said to Jesus. St. Peter applies on Pentecost day the text of the Old Testament Prophet Joel : " Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved " to Jesus. For Peter, therefore, the name of Jesus is the name of God.

" Let all the house of Israel know most certainly," said Simon Peter, " that God hath made both Lord and Christ this same Jesus whom you have crucified." It was not sufficient for Israel to believe that Jesus was the Christ, they must needs believe that He was " the Lord," invested with the title which was the common word which the Jew gave to God.

But why waste words ? No unprejudiced mind can deny that the Apostles and their disciples glorified Jesus as God, with the Father and the Holy Ghost ; that on their lips these three names, though signifying different persons in some sense, yet stood for the one God, Creator of heaven and earth, that all their words and deeds would become incoherent and unintelligible if they held the Father only to be really God and Christ and the Holy Ghost mere creatures of His hand.

CHAPTER III

SCRIPTURAL DIFFICULTIES

§1. *Christ's cry on the Cross.*
§2. *" Why callest thou me good ?"*
§3. *Christ's supposed predictions of immediate return.*

§1. *Christ's Cry on the Cross.*

It may be useful if we here add a few of the most common difficulties that are raised against the truth of Christ's divinity as set forth in the New Testament.

People have found difficulty in the mysterious cry of Christ upon the Cross : " God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ?" Jews and infidels have argued that it proved that Christ gave way to despair, and was thus obviously merely human. Believers have sometimes been puzzled as to what was the meaning of these words, and have sought an explanation in the supposition that Christ's human vision of God was obscured or overclouded, or that Christ bore the sins of all men, and thus realized Himself as the bearer of all iniquity, and as such forsaken by the Father.

Jews and infidels are easily answered by a reference to the fact that Christ's words were clearly the first verse of the 22nd Psalm, and that for the meaning of those words they must read through the Psalm referred to. They will see that the Psalmist does not voice despair ; that the Psalmist does not suppose that he

is forsaken by God in the sense of God having withdrawn His divine favour and grace, but only in the sense of abandoning him to the fury of his foes. They will see that it is a loving expostulation to God in the midst of the mocking jeering crowd who are causing the agony of the Sufferer. They will see that the predominant note of the Psalm is one of complete trust in God, a tender clinging to His infinite goodness, and towards the end a peal of triumphant joy. The word " Why " with which the Psalm opens is the natural cry of a human soul in great distress, surrendering indeed to God's blessed will, but wondering at the mysteriousness of God's plans and the strange ways of Providence that should require or allow so unexampled and unmerited pains in the hearts of those that love God. If the Psalmist was not in despair when he began his Psalm, why should Christ have been ?

The whole tenour of the Gospels is against such an idea, for Christ is represented as full of the utmost confidence in God, and often rebuking His followers as men of little faith ; and only the evening before His death bidding His disciples to be of good cheer, as He had overcome the world. Nothing can be more historically certain than that the authors of the Gospels who recorded the words in question did not see in them a cry of despair.

They make Christ threaten His persecutors with His return on the clouds of heaven only a few hours before ; they make Christ promise Paradise in His company to the penitent thief on the Cross ; they make Christ commend His soul to His Father, and proclaim that all is fulfilled, and they make Him utter a mighty cry in dying, clearly as a sign of His power, though all the

forces of His body had ebbed away. The evangelists make it plain that they saw in the details of the Passion the minute fulfilment of the prophecies. They actually quote Psalm 22 as being fulfilled, when therefore they put the first words of that Psalm on Christ's lips, we may rest quite certain that it never occurred to them that these words implied despair, or lack of trust in God.

Therefore it is historically unsound to give those words a meaning which they did not convey to His own most intimate friends. Let this suffice for Jews and infidels.

Christians, however, have also searched with all reverence into the meaning of these great words of sorrow. Sometimes they have sought an explanation in the suggestion that Christ as God allowed in His human soul the vision of God to become clouded and overcast, that He in His human soul voluntarily passed through a time of darkness. Sometimes they have made the strange suggestion that, as Christ carried on His shoulders the sins of all the world, as the Great Substitute for sinners, for whom He made atonement, He allowed Himself to feel the pain of the loss of God, as if He were alienated and separated from His heavenly Father.

Such suggestions, however well meant, and though sometimes coming from the lips of pious persons, are most dangerous, because almost indistinguishable from a great misunderstanding. Christ even as man could not err. Never ; and one might almost add, least of all on the Cross. A feeling of alienation or separation from God would in Christ's soul have been a terrible illusion, if we understand it as a feeling that He was really

separated from God, or that His divine Father was wroth with Him. Such a thing would be inconceivable and blasphemous, for Christ even in His agony knew who He was, and His soul was God's own soul, and He ever saw the face of His Father who was in heaven. "This is my dearly beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" was as true of Christ passing through the waters of death as of Christ standing in the waters of the Jordan, or being transfigured on Mount Thabor.

Christ was utterly innocent, and He knew that sin was intrinsically impossible to His innermost being. The guilt of sin cannot be transferred from one soul to another. Not even in the divine Atonement could the guilt of men's sins be transferred, for this would be not so much a blasphemy as an absurdity and palpable impossibility. Imprudent people have used such extravagant expressions as that Christ, willing to undergo the uttermost penalty of the sinner, allowed His soul to feel, as it were, the torments of hell.

They are strange and dangerous words, barely safeguarded by the expression "as it were." The essence of the torments of hell consists in the knowledge of alienation from God, but Christ's soul was never alienated from God, nor could He think that it was. Christ felt an unspeakable sadness, loathing and horror, at the innumerable sins of men, because of their intrinsic heinousness and ugliness, which revolted His God-owned soul and because of the punishment and degradation which they involved for His fellowmen, His own kith and kin according to the flesh, whom He loved with immeasurable love. He felt this most of all because they offended His Father, whom He loved and adored with all the might of His being.

No calamity ever so cast down a human soul as the fact of sin cast down the soul of Christ and steeped it in the deepest depth of bitterest sorrow. Christ on the Cross so profoundly deplored sin that His mental agony must have far exceeded all bodily pains, and must have been the real cause of His death. On entering Gethsemane, He had protested that His soul was sorrowful unto death, and He entered then into an agony which would have ended in His death in the Garden but for direct divine intervention. On the Cross after His Cry : " O God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me," the sorrow of His soul actually caused His bodily death.

We cannot easily realize that any one should thus sorrow about another's sin, but sometimes even amongst mere men, people have been known to die out of sorrow for others. History may give us but few examples, yet there are some. A mother may pine away and die because of the disaster that befel her children ; a husband may die because of the calamity that met the wife he loved. The contemplation of the pain of our fellowmen fills us all with sadness. How much more would the sight of the evil of sin and plight of His fellowmen fill Christ with sadness, as He alone fathomed the depth of that evil and He alone loved His fellowmen to the uttermost. His dread and revulsion, His supreme repudiation of sin, His indescribable sorrow and sadness, His cry of pity to His Father, His desire to make amends for the sins of His brethren and sisters according to the flesh, His willing death in their stead on the altar of divine justice ; all these things constitute the Atonement.

But all this is surely totally different from any imagined undergoing of quasi-torments of hell, or illusion that the wrath of God rested on Him. Christ redeemed us precisely because He bore our punishment but not our guilt. *Christus innocens patri reconciliavit peccatores.*

How could Christ undergo this desolation, this lonesomeness or this abandonment and unutterable grief, if He were conscious of His personal union with God, who is everlasting happiness and bliss ?

A complete answer we cannot give, for no man but Christ experienced personal union with God. However, men have been in union with God through sanctifying grace, and many saints have been in union with God through supernatural revelation. God has given great graces and illuminations to certain mystics, by which they were lifted to the third heaven like St. Paul. Such people, though their souls were flooded with supernatural happiness, have at the same time known great sorrows.

Martyrs on the eve of their supreme sacrifice, when their soul was in closest union with God, and when therefore they possessed that inward peace which surpasses all understanding, have none the less passed through long hours of deepest darkness of soul. Blessed Margaret Clitheroe showed a steadfastness in the faith, a completeness of self-surrender, a patience during incredible torments, which excite our amazement. Her love for God made her abandon her husband, her home, and her children, rather than be unfaithful to God. On the eve of her cruel martyrdom—she was bound in a sack and crushed to death at York for having harboured priests—this Margaret passed

the night in an agony of sorrow and dread, which must have been fearsome to behold. Prostrate for hours on the floor of her dungeon, she groaned in anguish and sorrow. Yet she knew that a word of apostasy from her lips would have restored her to her most happy home. If she did not say it, it was because her soul was so firmly rooted in God, so close in the embrace of His sweet grace, that she preferred to die rather than lose His love. She knew, moreover, that after a few hours of martyrdom, however fierce, she would forthwith be rewarded with the happiness of the Saints in heaven. Yet nothing of all this prevented her agony of dread which was some faint renewal of the agony of Christ in the Garden.

Blessed Margaret has not left us a description of her state of soul previous to her martyrdom, but many saints tell us that in their mystic states they combined unutterable happiness with unutterable sorrow. They could have died for sorrow, had not God prevented it, although they never lost that happiness which only God can give.

Such considerations may perhaps help us a little in our endeavour to understand Christ's blessed soul during His Passion. United as it was with the person of God the Son, it always possessed supernatural joy, yet this in no sense lessened the reality and fulness of its sorrows. Christ's soul has been compared to a high mountain, whose peak is in the still glow and glory of everlasting sunshine, while its base is beaten by the blackest storm.

As far as we can see, to some people death is easy, to some it is very hard. Christ determined that He in His humanity would know the sum of all human

sorrows, hence He determined that His death should be hard, that thus all should be helped by His example. The greatness of His agony He manifested in the words: " O God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ?"

§2. *" Why callest thou me good ?"*

Sometimes an objection is raised from Our Lord's refusal of the title " good," as applicable only to God, as if thereby Our Lord disclaimed divinity for himself. We refer to Christ's answer to the rich young man, as reported by St. Mark and St. Luke : " Why callest thou me good ? None is good but God alone " (Mark x, 18 ; Luke xviii, 18). But the objection is very shallow.

First, it ignores the text of St. Matthew, which makes the young man ask not, " Good Master, what shall I do ?" but, " Master, what good shall I do ?" The same text makes Our Lord reply, not, " Why callest thou me good ? None is good but God alone," but, " Why askest thou me about good ? There is one good : God." Now, it is only common sense to follow St. Matthew, who, in reporting the sayings of Our Lord, is mostly closer to the *ipsissima verba* than the other evangelists, and who in this particular text is supported by the so-called Gospel to the Hebrews. We may paraphrase the evangelists, to bring out the meaning of the passage, as follows. A young man runs up, as St. Mark puts it, falls at Our Lord's feet and holding Him says : " Good Master, what sort of good deeds must I do to obtain everlasting life ?" Our Lord answers : "Whom do you call 'good,' Why do you say 'good?' There is one who is good : God, and He has told

you in the ten commandments what good to do to obtain heaven." Our Lord recites some of the commandments against which people most usually sin. The young man regarded Our Lord as an especially good rabbi, who had some new additional "good works" to recommend to one who wished to be a "good" Jew, and to obtain the eternal reward promised to the good. Our Lord answers the young man in the way in which he answered the people who asked about the coin of the tribute, or about divorce or about his authority. He answers by a counter question, and a reference to an obvious text, or obvious truth. What do you mean by "good?" There is one good: God, and He has told you how to be good. Read the commandments. Thus St. Matthew on the one hand, and St. Mark and St. Luke on the other hand, correctly give the sense. "Why do you say: 'good'" meant two things, viz., "Why do you call me good?" and "Why do you ask what good you should do?"

The point of Our Lord's answer is not a disclaimer either of divinity or of goodness, but, "Why do you come to me with a question the answer to which stares you in the face? I am not just one other rabbi in Israel; not even a particularly good one with some new recipe for obtaining heaven teaching you some more minute point of ceremony or law to secure salvation. The good God has given you His commandments; keep them and live." Christ did not mean a rebuke, as if the young man had done something wrong in calling anybody good but God. He meant to make him think. "Why precisely do you call me a good rabbi?" It was a question to draw him out, not to blame him.

Does any reasonable person suppose that the young man was in any way likely to think Jesus God or by calling him " good rabbi " to give Him the honour due only to God, and that he had thus to be set right on a point on which he was mistaken? Christ did not rebuke Peter or Nathanael for calling Him " Son of the living God," and can He have rebuked the innocent young man for calling Him " good rabbi?" The objection is therefore without weight.

Moreover the context almost clamours against the idea of such an explanation. The young man said he had kept the commandments from his youth. Jesus looked on him and loved him, for it was true. But there were greater heights still than merely keeping the commandments of the good God. The observance of the commandments makes you " good," but not perfect. " If you want to be perfect, sell all you have and follow Me!" Following Jesus Christ is greater even than keeping the Commandments of God. Surely such a claim would be horrible blasphemy, unless he who spoke was God.

§3. *Christ's supposed prediction of immediate return.*

There is a third difficulty, which in itself hardly merits attention, were it not that in modern days so much is being made of it that through its confident repetition the unwary may be confused.

It is usually styled the eschatological difficulty. It is maintained that Christ foretold His own return on the clouds of heaven immediately after His death and that in so doing He erred. Some indeed by a strange theological device would grant that He erred in his human knowledge and still they would maintain

His divinity in some sort of fashion. With these misguided persons we shall not deal at present. The bulk, however, of those who urge this difficulty, do so with the conviction that by proving Christ to have erred they have disproven His divinity.

We hope in another volume to deal with this point in detail. Let it here suffice to give a brief answer. We shall do so in the form of a few questions.

Is it likely that He, who correctly foretold His own death, should have erred in foretelling what was immediately to follow it ?

Is it likely that He who foretold the fall of Jerusalem, which took place forty years after His death, should have imagined His immediate return on the clouds of heaven, which did not happen ?

Is it likely that His followers, who are said to have recorded this supposed false prediction, and who are supposed to have seen it falsified, should have encompassed the world with their preaching and have founded the Christian faith ?

Is it likely that His followers should have put on record His words : " Of that day no one knoweth, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father," if Christ had predicted that He should return immediately after His death ?

Is it likely that St. Paul should have written to the Thessalonians some twenty years after Our Lord's Resurrection : " We beseech you regarding the coming of Our Lord. . . that ye be not troubled, either by spirit, or by word or by epistle as from us, as if the day of the Lord were at hand, let no man beguile you in any wise ! " if it were plain that the Lord had foretold His coming with any precision ?

Is it likely that Our Lord, who said that " first the Gospel must be preached in all the world," Our Lord, who spoke of " the times of Gentiles," which would follow the rejection of Israel, when Israel should be led captive amongst all nations, supposed all this to happen within a few years ?

Is it likely that the many parables of Our Lord that indicate a long delay before His return and that inculcate patient watchfulness, the parable of the tares and the wheat growing side by side till the end of the world, of the bridegroom tarrying till all slumbered and slept, of the servant who beat his fellow servants because his master was long in coming, and a number of other parables, can be reconciled with a conviction that He was to return on the clouds of heaven forthwith after His death ?

Is it likely that the solitary text which is quoted in support of Our Lord's imagined prophecy of immediate return, e.g. : " Some of those here standing shall not see death till they see the Son of Man coming into His kingdom," contains a meaning which contradicts the whole tenour of Our Lord's words in the Gospel ? Is not the kingdom here mentioned the kingdom of which He gave the keys to St. Peter, the kingdom like unto a net catching good fish and bad ; like unto ten virgins, five of whom were foolish and five wise ; like unto a field which held good seed and bad ; in fact, His kingdom on earth, that is : the Church which He built ? Did not Christ manifestly enter into that kingdom during the lifetime of those who stood around Him when He uttered those words ?

When Jerusalem had fallen and the Old Covenant had passed away and Christ's Church was spreading

throughout the civilized world, had not Christ entered into His Kingdom, that Kingdom that is still with us and which shall never pass away ?

There is but one rational answer possible to all these questions and that answer is incompatible with the strange hallucination of these latter years that Christ mistakenly foretold His immediate return in glory, but that by some incomprehensible process Christianity started and succeeded, in spite of this initial mistake. Sheer common sense ought to have taught unsophisticated men that Christianity could not have survived the ghastly blunder.

Away therefore with this folly, which cannot stand the daylight of a few moments of sane and vigorous thought !

CHAPTER IV

CHRIST'S DIVINITY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

§1. *Christianity is Christ.*
§2. *The Power of Christ in history.*
§3. *The Power of Christ to-day.*

THE proof of Christ's divinity does not lie exclusively within the two covers of the New Testament. The written record of Christ's life, compiled by the four Evangelists, is not the only available evidence to show us who Jesus of Nazareth was. A stranger from another planet reading our four Gospels, but ignorant of the last two thousand years of our history, would indeed be so deeply impressed with the story of the Galilean prophet, that he would surmise that the Godhead dwelt in him in some unique manner, though it may well be doubted if he would fully realize the mystery of the Incarnation.

The endeavour to prove Christ's divinity from the bare text of the four Gospels, isolated from their place in history, is exceedingly difficult. It is normally difficult to prove anything from a mere book, from a page that is stark and stiff, and cannot speak or answer questions. Even a book of Euclid, or a carefully compiled code of laws, is useless, of itself, to enlighten and convince a befogged and ignorant enquirer.

It needs the authoritative voice of a living master.

How much more so the four Gospels, which were written by simple folk to be read within the Christian community, or to be to benevolent outsiders rather a guide than a rigid demonstration of the divine personality of Christ.

The four Gospels are books of devotion, containing a loving exposition of some facts of the past. They were prompted by the needs and the circumstances of those for whom they were written ; they were never meant to be by themselves the final and exhaustive proof of Christ's nature and person. The faulty methods of four hundred years of Protestantism, which proclaims the Bible, and the Bible only, as the religion of Christians, have enfeebled the historical sense of many, by leading them to think that the total proof of Christianity consists in the fourscore chapters of a printed book.

To compare sacred things with secular one might as well say that the only evidence of the Norman invasion of England is in the tapestry of Bayeux ! If all contemporary written evidence of the Norman invasion had completely perished (as a matter of fact I do not think there is much in existence) still the evidence of that historical fact would be clear as noonday. For it stands written in the bodies and souls of Englishmen ; in their features and their frame ; in the colour of their eyes and the tint of their hair ; in their customs and their manners and their speech ; in the ruins of ancient buildings scattered over their land ; in the rules and laws which they follow in court, market-place and home. The memory of the battle between William and Harold, and the coming of the Normans, has never died these nigh on nine hundred years, and during all

that time any English child over the age of twelve would have known of it.

What is true of political history is true also of religious. Had Matthew, Mark, Luke and John never written a word, there would still be Christendom to tell who Christ was. Pliny, a pagan, writing within some eighty years of Christ's death, tells us that the Christians came together in the morning to sing hymns to Christ as God: *Christo tamquam deo.* They do so still in this twentieth century. Even the words have not changed, for East and West, Greeks and Latins, still sing in the "Gloria" in the morning, "Thou alone art holy, Thou alone art Lord, Thou alone art the Most High, O Jesus Christ, with the Holy Ghost in the glory of God the Father. Amen."

The person of Christ and the meaning of the Gospels are not an object of research reserved for a small coterie of university professors. There are at least some five hundred million followers of Christ in the world. They have a right to be heard. The man who thinks as he sits in his armchair with the Greek text of the Gospels in front of him, that he has the full evidence on which to decide who Christ was, lacks historical sense. Christ founded Christianity, and Christianity is not of yesterday. Christendom cannot be dismissed as the bumbledom of a parish council. He that attempts so to dismiss it is not an historian, but a sectarian who mistakes fanaticism for learning, and the dogmatism of a small clique of Modernists for the decision of the wise. In a sense, we Christians of the twentieth century have an advantage over those of the first. We have what they had not, the proof of twenty centuries of Christianity.

§1. *Christ is Christianity.*

Christianity is the belief that Christ is God. Christianity centres in Christ. Christianity is Christ. Mohammedanism is not Mohammed. Buddhism is not Buddha. No Moslem adores his prophet, no Buddhist worships Buddha. Both these religions would be what they are without their founders. They are systems, and sets of doctrine, independent of the persons who first proclaimed them. Confucius, Laotze and Zoroaster are interesting personages. Those who embrace their teachings may even have some reverence for their memory, and respect for them as sages of the past, but it would be almost ridiculous to suggest that they loved them as the life of their life, the soul of their soul. The Moslem on his deathbed does not kiss an image of Mohammed with trembling lips and die breathing his name. The dying Chinaman does not whisper " Confucius " and die happily because he has loved Confucius all the days of his life.

Christianity is unique in the story of mankind. The true Christian re-echoes the words of St. Paul: " To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." " I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." Yet, strange to say, St. Paul had never seen Christ in the flesh, and the thousands of millions of Christians that lived since never saw Christ with mortal eyes. From the cot of the innocent child, and from the bed of pain of the aged, rise loving and tender appeals to Jesus, as the desire of the hearts of young and old. Over the nursery and over the battlefield, over timid girls and over men of mighty deeds, the name of Jesus casts a spell as no other man's name has ever done.

Nor has His name been merely a source of sentiment

and tenderness of feeling. Where He has reigned there has been light, knowledge and action. His religion has become practically that of the white man. Christianity till recently has been coterminous with civilisation. Jesus is adored as God, not by a few backward races who give legends easy credence, and who could not intelligently reflect on what they believe, but faith in Him has filled the minds of those who are rightly esteemed as the most intelligent of men.

Belief in Him has not been an idle speculation, a languid opinion, or an abstract theory. It has acted as an irresistible stimulus to the noblest energies of men. The record of the achievements of Christ's disciples has filled the earth. It would be difficult to find in the story of civilized man for the last fifteen hundred years any great benevolent and noble work which did not owe its inspiration to His Sacred Name. He found a world sunk in polytheism and idolatry and filled it with worshippers of the true God. Even Mohammedanism, which arose six hundred years after His death, could not have succeeded in spreading its monotheism unless Christianity had preceded it. If to-day some eight hundred millions of men accept the unity of the Godhead as a self-evident truth, they owe it directly or indirectly—I am speaking merely as a historian—to Jesus of Nazareth.

He founded a Church, which, after nineteen hundred years, seems still in the vigour of early youth, and shows no sign of decay. It is scattered through all nations, and in Rome, the centre of its life, it has engraved proudly and truly under an ancient obelisk the words: *Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus*

imperat. Christ has conquered. Christ is king. Christ is Lord over all.

The astounding vitality of the Catholic Church, a vitality as unimpaired and mighty to-day as it was almost two thousand years ago, is a marvel to any thoughtful historian.

Thoughtless litterateurs may write "Outlines of History" which obscure the realities of the past and veil the actualities of the present, in the hope that the casual and hurried reader may forget the greatness of the Catholic Church. But to most people a moment of reflection comes at some time. Then there appears to them the luminous figure of the Church that Jesus of Nazareth founded on the Rock, on him who had proclaimed: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Behind the din of many battles and the maddening strife of politics, most people have at some time heard the ringing of the Angelus bells, repeating: "The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary and she conceived of the Holy Ghost. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us."

Anonymous scribblers may write under huge headlines in the newspapers that Christianity is a failure, but in serious men they only deepen contempt for newspaper stunts. Mankind will go its way undeterred by the screeching of a few pressmen. None but the very young and unexperienced imagine that the whole world can be read and understood from the columns of a daily paper. It soon dawns upon them that behind there lies a vast and deep world, which is inarticulate as far as the printing press is concerned. Jesus Christ and His followers do not rely on advertisement. He and His Church suffer from a bad press. But there are

compensations. Some movements are the stronger for not being the gossip of the market-place. Publicity often enervates and weakens. There are greater things than the glamour of a paragraph in the papers.

People pick up a paper for half-an-hour's distraction or amusement, but in the greater moments of life the paper slips from their hands, and they close their eyes and think. An editor may be an able and diverting fellow, but few will whisper into his ear the secrets of their souls.

Those who try to get to the heart of things, those for whom history is not merely a pageant of courts and camps and parliaments, know that two thousand years ago Some One entered this world who for them has changed the face of the earth. Though He was crucified in early manhood, and His public life was short, the world of men can never again be the same, since He has lived.

So vivid is the realization of this truth in those who have the historical sense and dare to face facts, that some of them, preferring the heedless gaiety of the pagan world to deeper peace of soul, have angrily declaimed against the ghost of the gaunt Galilean, who has spoiled man's sport for nineteen centuries. It is true that the cloud of Calvary hangs over this earth, but it is a lightsome cloud, full of the glory of God within.

§2. *The Power of Christ in history.*

There will be always some who are annoyed by the light, some who are blear-eyed through sin, some who are mentally impotent and hate to be stirred to vigorous thinking, some loth to leave lazy dreamland for the

stern labours of a follower of Christ, some who have so long pored over a manuscript, or kept their eye to a microscope that in pettifogging pride they resent any reference to a world beyond their limited sphere. But on the other hand there will be always many who, however imperfect, still welcome the light and are naturally sensitive to the appeal of Christ. Their unclouded reason soon sees that to regard Christ merely as a man, good indeed and unselfish, but still only a man, is not to do justice to the facts of the present and the past. It is to give an explanation of history which is absurdly inadequate. It is in fact so inadequate that, though it may be given with blatant audacity to serve the needs of controversy, yet a man is ashamed to present it to himself when alone with his innermost thoughts. The mystery of the reign of Christ in the hearts of men for nearly two thousand years is not solved by describing Him as a Galilean preacher, who for three years taught kind and pleasant things to a crowd of Jewish peasants, and was put to death for his pains. He was in truth human, but He was more besides.

When in the story of the human race was there ever a man known like unto Him? Those who were intimate with Him during His brief stay on earth saw in Him the long-promised Messias; saw in Him the Son of the living God. When the possibility of leaving Him was suggested to them, they cried: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." He was the one experience of their lives. They were convinced that God had made Him wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. No hope but found an anchor in Him, no exalted thought but

found in Him its living expression. He had said: "He that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me. Sell whatever thou hast, give it to the poor and follow me." They had gladly, swiftly obeyed and given Him all they possessed. They deemed themselves rich in possessing Him, for He was their all in life and in death.

He was all that their minds could conceive as great, good, holy and most high. They glorified Him not merely as the bringer of a revelation from God, but as the Prince of Life, as the Redeemer and Judge of the world. They knew Him as the life, He was enthroned as King and Master in the depth of their souls. They were in Christ and He was in them: "in Him they lived and moved and had their being." In the bitter hardships of their apostolic life He was their joy, the pledge of their Resurrection and Eternal Life. The thought of Him dispelled all sorrow and sweetened even their torments and death.

His own disciples, and the generation that had seen Him in Galilee, and Samaria and Jerusalem, were swiftly followed by an innumerable multitude from every tongue and people and nation, proclaiming that of His fulness they had all received. As from a flaming torch another is lighted, and from that again others, till a sea of light and flame reddens the sky of night, so in the darksome years of the first century there spread throughout the world a conflagration which nothing could extinguish—neither the vast multitude massacred by Nero, nor the numbers put to death by the sombre suspicions of Domitian, nor the calculated ferocity of Decius or Diocletian. The divine fire has spread throughout the centuries with

incessant energy. Even when in the lives of those who in later centuries claimed His name, greed and lust and pride and quarrelsomeness seemed to dim the glory of the Crucified, yet it was but a seeming. For never was the power of His name lessened among the untold millions, among those who made no political or ecclesiastical history, but who lived and died under the blissful spell of the hallowed name of Jesus.

Jesus being in the form of God, had not thought it something to be striven for to be reckoned equal with God, but made Himself of no account, taking upon Himself the form of a servant, and having become like unto a man, was found in appearance as man. Therefore God exalted Him and gave Him a name which is above every name, that every knee might bow of those in heaven, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue might confess that Christ is in the glory of the Father. So spoke St. Paul to the people of Philippi and so it is to-day. Though in some over-civilized and decadent circles the name of Jesus may have lost its music, though deaf ears no sound can charm, yet, where man still yields to his better instincts, and is not depraved or rendered unnatural by the squalor of our industrial system, or by the vicious atmosphere of pseudo-science, and is not deceived by anonymous and irresponsible writing in a commercialized press, there the blissful power of the name of Jesus is what it ever has been since He rose from the dead.

For Him throughout the centuries countless millions have died, not with the warrior's triumphant cry on their lips, but without glamour and glory, under slow and hideous torments, amidst a howling mob, or before a few cynical persecutors, or alone in prison. Some

people imagine that the age of martyrs has passed away, not realizing that as an historical fact there never has been since the dawn of our era a space of as much as twenty years in which there was not a band of martyrs to testify to Christ. Within living memory there have been martyrdoms in Annam and Siam, in China, in Uganda, in the Ukraine under the Czarist régime. Within the last few years Russia and Mexico have given numerous martyrs for the name of Christ.

§3. *The Power of Christ to-day.*

Here is a true story. Four Catholic children, between twelve and fifteen, three boys and a girl, chance to hear that a Bolshevist band is coming to invade the church, to profane the Blessed Sacrament and steal the Sacred vessels. They rush to the church to save their Blessed Lord. They find the church closed, but they climb in by a window. As they cannot open the Tabernacle, they remain standing on the altar steps, and await the coming of these human monsters. Soon the rabble surround the church, the doors are broken open. Two of the boys are immediately shot dead and fall on the altar steps. The other boy is wounded, the girl is driven away. When later the dying boy is carried out, he keeps on repeating: "I have defended Him! I have defended Him!" Who is He, that children should die for Him in far away Russia nineteen centuries after He was crucified in Palestine? Here is another story. A few months ago two boys were caught distributing Catholic literature in Mexico. Their captors tried to force them to shout: Viva Calles! They answered with the cry: Viva Cristo Rey! Praise to Christ the King! At the command of the

officer, the tongue was torn out of the mouth of one of the lads and a few moments later both boys were shot dead.

For Christ the King the young with fearless steps have walked to the place of torment, the aged have hobbled on crutches to the scaffold ; the learned and wise have laid their necks on the block, simple folk have offered themselves to the sword. If in our days persecution should break out in Europe, no doubt there would be many apostasies, but there would also be, as the experience of our bi-millenial past history teaches us, an army of men, women and children, of every speech and nation, of every calling in life, from palace and from hovel, ready to die for Him. In the Catholic Church the age of martyrs has lasted from Stephen, who was stoned in Jerusalem, and who, as he fell saw the heavens opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, to Mgr. Butkewitch, whom only yesterday they stripped naked and shot in a cellar at Petrograd. So it will continue till the last martyr dies in torments on that day when Christ will come again in majesty on the clouds of heaven.

History is the great avenger of Jesus of Nazareth. The more one reads history the more one realizes the awful solitary majesty, and withal the irresistible attraction, there is in the figure of the Man from Galilee.

Scattered over the world are numberless monasteries and convents, hospitals, homes, schools and institutions, where they live and work who devote themselves utterly to Him. In voluntary poverty, chastity and obedience, they give themselves to prayer and to adoration of Him, and for His sake they spend themselves in work for their fellowmen. Besides these

places specially dedicated to Him, there are those millions of private homes, those millions of families, in the intimacy of which He is enthroned, where His name is as music to the ear, where every thought, word and deed is guarded, lest it should offend Him, homes where the happiest moments are those when in common prayer the members of the household kneeling praise Him. His divine power is palpable and manifest in the intimacy of myriads of households, where each member receives Him to the joy of all in His mysterious sacramental presence, where in the moment of bereavement the one consoling thought is He. Armies and fleets and the craft of the air, treaties, assemblies, councils and parliaments, when compared with this power of Christ, are as the froth on the surface of the sea. "Empires rise and sink like billows, vanish and are seen no more," says the hymn, but He alone remains, and of His kingdom there is no end. People to whom the wish is father to the thought ask with only half-concealed delight: "Is Christianity a failure?" while Christ marches in triumph through the world.

But the kingdom of God cometh not with observation, as the Scriptures say.

If you wish to learn the power of Jesus Christ do not always ask in the market-place, nor scan the headlines of a paper, do not always visit a palace or a college in a university town. Go into the dwellings of the simple, into many a hovel of our vast cities, or into a cottage forgotten in the country. If you find peace and contentment, chastity and charity, look around and you will see His image on the wall, or listen, and you will soon hear His name, but for Him the place would be a den of sin, hatred and envy. Through Him alone their

hard life has become bearable and sweet. Go into the workshops of our industrial centres, you will hear and see much that is obscene and foul, but if you find a young man or a young woman there whose eyes are modest and whose lips are pure, you may be sure that somewhere about their person is concealed an image of the Crucified, or, if they would let you look in their innermost heart, you will read there the name of Jesus, the Virgin's Son.

Go amongst the fallen and the degraded, whom no earthly power could raise out of the slough of despond, the depth of sin. Again and again you will find some who have risen and now practise virtue and self-restraint. Ask them who lifted them up from sin to sanctity and they will stammer out the name of Him who once conversed with sinners and who seems unchanged since the days of Mary, the sinner of Magdala, and the Penitent Thief on Golgotha.

Or if you must go amongst the mighty, the wealthy, the learned, even there you will find witnesses to Him. If you find amongst the mighty one who is humble ; amongst the wealthy, one whom his riches have not soiled and made sensual ; amongst the learned, one who is not puffed up with his acquirements ; investigate his case, I will lay a wager with you that in nine cases out of ten that man has had a vision of Jesus of Nazareth, the Teacher from Galilee has persuaded him. But whether men be rich or poor, the time comes to all when this world and the fashion thereof pass away from them, then, when death is near, Jesus of Nazareth loves to come, and He has helped thousands of millions to die. To the man who whispers the name of Jesus in his agony the bitterness of death is gone and the dark

gate into the Beyond has ceased to hold terrors for him.

When all human help is of no avail, myriads, in dying, turn to Him, who is man indeed, but more than man, who died indeed, but who rose from the dead.

Who is He, the brightness of whose name drives away from millions even the darkness of death ?

To keep the memory of Jesus alive in the hearts of men there are no blaring trumpets, there are no gigantic hoardings with gaudy advertisements, there are no flaring, flickering, ever-moving, many-coloured lights to dazzle the eye. No such vulgarities proclaim His blessed Name. Yet withal there is hardly a nook or corner in this wide world into which the power of that Name has not penetrated, where His influence is not felt, be it but by the very opposition, secret and open, which it arouses.

" When I shall be lifted up, I shall draw all things unto myself," said Jesus of Nazareth. He has kept His word, and the greatness of His achievement is the proof of His glory, which is that of one who, though man, was God over all, blessed for evermore.

CHAPTER V

THE DIVINE SUBLIMITY OF THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST

§1. *The source of variety in human character.*
§2. *The seeming infinity of the mind of Christ.*
§3. *The strength and tenderness of Christ's Will.*

As no two faces on earth are exactly alike, so no two human characters on earth are exactly the same. That peculiar blend of peculiarities, mental, volitional, emotional, temperamental, which singles out my individuality from every other in this world, is inalienable and unique. The study of character has ever had a strange fascination, hence literature is flooded with biographies and descriptions of men's ways and methods their predilections and aversions, and their unaccountable and quaint reactions to all that surrounds them. Two characters may both be full of charm and beauty, yet completely different; two characters may be equally repulsive and ugly yet, again, their evil dispositions may be totally unlike. In the Library of Biographies there never was a duplicate.

Had Jesus, being a man like us, a character of His own, as we have, a character by which His friends would immediately have recognized him as distinct from all others?

We must answer both yes and no, and explain.

§1. *The source of variety in human character.*

Mere human characters are differentiated especially by their peculiar limitations. Each man develops in one peculiar way, and develops in that way alone. Perhaps his character is marked by strength and vigour, but then he is liable not to be at the same time remarkable for tenderness and affection. He may indeed have a small circle of intimate friends, but towards the world at large he must be adamant and forceful, if he is to carry his plans through, and the very effort to steel his will tends to make it hard and harsh.

Again, perhaps a man's character is marked by loving affection, by sympathy for his kind. He is a delightful companion, an ideal friend. The irresistible charm of easy, eager fellowship with those he meets, makes him the idol of his circle. But, however much his friends admire him, they will acknowledge that he is not at the same time the man to force his way through all obstacles and thrust aside his nearest and dearest to reach his goal. His loving character is itself a hindrance to greater achievement.

Once more, a man's character may be marked by a love of truth, a stern search for facts and realities, a willing martyrdom for the triumph of abstract justice. If so, he is apt sometimes to forget that this world cannot be run by lawyers alone, that a passionate desire for justice may be the source of much injustice, and that an imperious desire for abstract truth may lead to the overlooking of many concrete details and forgetting the weakness of flesh and blood.

One might continue indefinitely this balancing of opposite qualities, only to realize that amongst men no

one has ever achieved perfection. One reads a man's life-story and then inevitably sums up: So great a man, and yet . . . what a pity he did not realize this or that; what a pity he had no talent in this way or that! Our characters are mainly different by their very limitations. Even the greatest man is so very finite, that the humblest individual can see his limitations and wish them removed.

Still more. We are differentiated not merely by a peculiar lack of perfection in our nature, but by our sins and failures. No character is without its dark side—without something ugly, something repulsive. The unlimited possibility of evil threatens even the greatest soul. No one, left to himself, has ever been totally untainted.

When a biographer has only praise for the hero of his story we hold him a bad biographer; we do not quite believe him, so deeply are we convinced that there were flaws somewhere, and that attempts to explain them away are idle.

In the ordinary man's life we expect a mingling of the bad with the good, no matter how much the good may predominate, nor how heroic his struggle to overcome his faults. Every biography is the story of a battle, and ought to be one of a partial victory. We rejoice in the triumph, but we know the victory was not complete. The character of a man is marked with scars and deformities as is the body of the hero of many fights. But scars and deformities are scars and deformities, though we rejoice that they led not to death, that they stopped short of total disfigurement, and that life and courage triumphed as far as they could. Or, if we study men not in books but in real

life, what friend have we had who never did a wrong thing, though the wrong was slight and he repented? Or if in charity we overlook the faults of our friends, which of us, writing his own life-story, could truly paint it only in colours of light and beauty?

Now Jesus of Nazareth had indeed His own character, utterly distinct from that of any others, but neither limitation nor sinfulness enters into the description of it. This precisely is characteristic of Jesus that He showed us humanity perfect and sinless. In this He stands alone among the children of men. By this His friends and foes will ever recognize Him and know that it is He, and He alone, and that none can ever be quite like Him. Let us study the mind of Jesus as revealed in the New Testament.

§2. *The seeming infinity of the mind of Christ.*

It is supreme flattery when we tell one of our fellowmen that he is a genius. There have been but few men in history who have deserved the name. Many have had a momentary flash of genius at some period in life, but barely a score of men in all the long centuries, have manifested throughout life a clearness of mind and consequent fixity of purpose.

Few, in consequence, have exercised an influence on their fellowmen which was permanent. It is given to few indeed to exceed the common measure of humanity; at most we copy one another and add only an infinitesimal trifle of our own to the treasure of knowledge that preceded us and was stored up before we were born. A thousand years are a short period to measure the space between the rise of one genius and another in any given

branch of knowledge. I mean one whose work will outlast the centuries and whose name will never die.

To say of a man that the human race acknowledges him as a genius, is to say the utmost of him that can be said. Yet were we to say of Jesus of Nazareth that he was a genius, a religious genius, even this phrase becomes almost absurd in its inadequacy.

Confucius, Zoroaster, Buddha, Mohammed were geniuses. They had in religious matters a clearness of vision, a forcefulness of expression, an enthusiasm for spreading their opinion, and a strength of conviction which were very exceptional. For a time many followed them ; they influenced the world on a large scale for a short time, in a lesser way for a long time. But then the world outgrew them, or turned to other thoughts, and the ultimate result of their efforts was insignificant.

Confucius, the Sage of China, must have been an exceptional man, but his message contained nothing new. He was the embodiment of the conservative spirit of the Chinese race. Back, said he, to the old customs and the established ways. As the ancestors had it, so must it be for ever, he decreed. Abstruse speculations about man's future, or the nature of the gods, what profit is in them ? Filial piety and submission to the powers that be, such is the highest wisdom. His influence was in many ways beneficent, but if we search the past ever so keenly it remains doubtful whether he gave the race a new thought of any kind, except to hallow what was old, and to suggest that man could never pass beyond it. He failed to hold even the minds of his own race, which have ever been divided in allegiance between him and Laotze and Buddha.

His simple piety has been deformed by arid Pantheism, which has passed for many centuries as Confucianism.

Zoroaster, the Sage of Persia, was no doubt a man of real worth, but what more did he than consecrate and slightly modify the ancient Dualism of Iran? And we can hardly say that his worship of Ahuramazda much excelled the religion of the Achæmenids before him. If the Gathas are a key to the mind of the ancient Persian master, he was a noble and spiritually-minded man, but these ancient songs, though beautiful, in no sense exceed the measure of the merely human. The world has gone beyond them, for Zoroaster had not even achieved pure monotheism. His influence seems to have been exceedingly limited, and few there are to-day who claim to be his followers.

Buddha, himself no doubt an outstanding figure, cannot be said to have been a beneficent genius to his race. He discarded the pantheistic speculations of the Brahmans, but he also set aside all consideration of the existence of a divinity and thought the existence of God an idle question. Yet he blindly adopted the common illusion of his race, that of the transmigration of souls. He fettered mankind with an imaginary chain of practically endless re-births; he cowed it by the bitter cruelty of an inexorable karma which means the mechanical and iron law of retribution without mercy or possibility of forgiveness. As the Supreme Apostle of hopeless pessimism, he did indeed cry: "Vanity of vanities and all is vanity," but he had no word of comfort to offer to suffering mankind, and no higher ideal for men than to escape from the wheel of existence. No doubt a great pity for his brethren gripped the soul of Buddha, but he could do nothing

better for them than to tell them to abandon all endeavour, all striving, all hoping ; to be passive till in the dim future they would exist no more. In the land where he taught he is almost forgotten ; Brahmanism and Hinduism have regained their sway. His name travelled to China, but his teaching was there transformed into the so-called Mahayana Buddhism, which bears no similarity to his original message, and which was never accepted by the Chinese as the sole truth. His teaching had never the power nor did it ever attempt to root out the degrading idolatries and superstitions which debased the multitude. Buddha no doubt was utterly sincere, but his feeble religion just dragged on its long existence ; for mankind has gone beyond the truth of " the noble eightfold path."

Mohammed had something of the inspiration of an Arab Prophet. But his message of monotheism was borrowed from Judaism and Christianity, whilst the slender and puerile additions he made of his own betray, as also his own personal and private life betrays with painful clearness, that he did not transcend the limits of sinful human nature.

But Jesus of Nazareth ?

His mind conceived a religion unparalleled in the story of men. He revealed the inner life of the Godhead itself. He told us a mystery undreamt of. He spoke of an eternal Father and an only-begotten Son, and a Spirit of Holiness, a Spirit of Truth, proceeding from Both in love.

Jesus of Nazareth is the only Man who has ever tried to lift the veil from the inner life of the Godhead. He has done so without descending to puerilities, or to gross materialistic imaginations that carry their own

condemnation on account of their futility. Instead of abstruse metaphysics, He gave us a mystery which, for spirituality, dignity and tenderness, stands alone in majesty.

Regarding man, He told us both of his littleness and his greatness, of his fall and his sinfulness, but also of his redemption and exaltation, and his sublime destiny. He told that man is to see God His Father face to face, and to be the heir of His Kingdom for ever.

He taught that it does not profit a man to gain the whole world and to suffer the loss of his own soul ; for what can a man give in exchange for his soul ? Yet Jesus, for all the spirituality of His teaching, did not despise the body, nor think matter evil, as many religious teachers have done. He hated sin, yet He ate and drank with sinners, and no man has ever given to sinful men more hope than He. None have understood men better, none have plumbed the depths of their sinfulness deeper than He, whilst satisfying their power and their hunger for good.

Of this Universe He told us indeed that heaven and earth will pass away, but that His word will not pass away. He told us that riches are dangerous, but He did not declaim against the rich to win cheap fame among the poor ; nor, on the other hand, did he declaim against the brutishness of the poor who knew not the law, to curry favour with the learned and wise, as if education were the passport to heaven.

The best way to get a true estimate of the mind of Jesus of Nazareth is to compare His religious system with the religious systems, I do not say of His own day merely, but of any period whatever in history. If any one studies the various religions of the past and

the present, the more he knows of them the more he will stand in amazement, akin to worship, before the mind of Him who first conceived Christianity. Other teachers said some striking and beautiful things, but also many things which proved useless or untrue. Christ spoke as no one has ever spoken before or since, as if His mind were all light and wisdom and tenderness and pity, as if His mind were at home with God yet equally conversant with everything human.

His religion is not merely a series of abstract doctrines about God and the Universe and men, it is also a moral code so sublime that it seems the highest possible ideal attainable by men.

All other religious teachers mankind has outgrown. It has passed them and left them behind. Will men ever pass beyond the ideal set by Jesus of Nazareth ?

The characteristic of the mind of Jesus is its seeming infinity. There seems to be in His mind no effort, no striving or struggling with mental obscurity, nothing which suggests that to think and to speak of these things taxes His power, so as to become a hardship and a strain upon Him. All other speakers after a flash of genius swiftly descend again to earth, as if exhausted after their momentary flight to higher spheres.

He speaks with ease, with calm, as a man speaks of what he has himself seen and easily understands. Christ is not overcome by the brightness of the light, nor so amazed at the greatness of His revelation as to shrink back again in humility. It seems to be his Birthright to live in the realm of light. He knew His Father, and His Father knew Him. No child is amazed at his intimacy with his own father or at the inner life of his home. A child speaking of his father, and his home,

takes all for granted. That sort of impression Christ creates on those who read His words. He speaks of mysteries beyond human ken, of the inner life of God, of the secrets of men's hearts, which He read as an open book ; and He speaks of the future with the same ease as one speaks of the past. He speaks of His building His Church, of His kingdom, of the Vicar who should carry the keys, of the rock against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, of the passing away of heaven and earth, and the permanence of His own words ; of His coming to judge all men on the clouds of heaven.

Yet He speaks of these things as we adults speak to children about things we know well, using simple, clear, words without affectation of mystery or rhetorical device, and without the slightest appearance of condescension. He spoke as to brothers and sisters. He sat at meat in the houses of the poor and of sinners. He had only indignation for the wiseacres of His time, who had taken away the key of knowledge defrauding the unlettered and the simple of their birthright.

When one has finished reading the words of Jesus one has the strange conviction that He knew regions even beyond those which He revealed. Jesus never gives His hearers the utmost He knows, nor does He speak so as to leave His hearers under the impression that He himself had searched with painful endeavour and found at last, that He, as well as His hearers, was in quest of truth, that He had not discovered all as yet, but lived in hope of discovering more. There is in Him infinite superiority and yet complete brotherliness.

§3. *The strength and tenderness of Christ's Will.*

Another mark of Christ's character is the brevity and conciseness of His speech. It is impossible to find in the Gospels a superabundant word. The most awful mysteries are touched upon in the fewest possible words, yet with such an unerring sureness and conspicuous clearness, that nothing is wanting. Striving after effect or heaping up of words is utterly alien to this Great Speaker. He spoke often in parables to the multitudes ; to the intimate circle of His Apostles He explained them ; but to all He spoke in utter simplicity. His foes, who asked Him questions to entangle Him in His speech, He answered with counter-questions, so unexpected, so surprising, yet so imperatively demanding a reply, that they retired ashamed and overcome, to the delight of the crowd. He seems never to have argued in the strict sense of the word. He taught the multitude and trained the Twelve ; cavillers He brushed aside with easy dignity ; the malice of mockery He countered with a flash of divine wisdom, with heavenly majesty, as when He said : " Before Abraham was, I am."

More difficult than the description of the tone of Christ's mind is the portrayal of His will and heart. He is so deeply, tenderly human, and yet . . . so completely beyond human measure. The evangelists tell us of only three of the many whom He raised from the dead by His power : the little girl just dead, the young man who was being carried to the grave, and the man who had been four days in the tomb.

Astounding indeed are these miracles of His power, but more astounding it is that the motive which prompted them was no display of power, but the tender

pity of His soul. With the tear-stained faces of the father and mother close to Him in the room, He seems to have had no choice but to bend over the bed of the child, take her hand and say, "Talitha cumi"—Little one! arise! When He saw the widow broken and bent with sorrow, stumbling and sobbing behind the bier of her only son, He was moved with mercy towards her and He said to her: "Weep not." Then He came near and touched the bier and said: "Young man, I say to thee, arise." And He gave him to his mother. Consider that last sentence: He gave him to his mother. He must have taken him, and well nigh carried him, and placed him in her arms. When that mother's arms had closed round the body of her risen son, then only did He step aside to go His way, probably to hide His tears.

Sometimes He did not hide them. His friend Lazarus was dead, and Mary and Martha, whom He loved, were pressing close to Him. He heard the loving reproach that sprang from their agonizing sorrow: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, our brother would not have died." *Et lacrimatus est Jesus:* then Jesus wept. With the tears still on His face He uttered His word of command that is not gainsaid even in the realm of the dead: "Lazarus, come forth."

What a strange blending of might and weakness, of meekness and majesty! There is in Christ a calm and a consciousness of power never before seen amongst men. His greatest marvels draw from Him neither boasting nor pride of achievement, nor a glad shout of success after an all too daring hope. He speaks as one having authority, uttering only the briefest word, with the

clear knowledge that it cannot be disobeyed. A leper cries to Him : " O Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean." "I will," said Jesus, " be thou made clean." " O Lord, say but a word, and my servant shall be healed !" " Go," said Jesus, " as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee."

With this measureless strength is united a tenderness greater than that of women. He, the Mighty One, loved to be with children. They brought to Him little children that He might touch them, and the disciples rebuked those that brought them. But Jesus, seeing this, was much displeased and said to them : " Suffer little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. Again I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter into it." And taking them into His arms, He laid His hands upon them and blessed them. No wonder that, in spite of the snarling envy of the priests and scribes, the children kept on shouting in the Temple and saying : " Hosanna to the Son of David." No wonder that Christ took their part, quoting the Psalmist : " Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God has fashioned perfect praise !"

Yet His affection did not soften the vigour of His character. Nothing more terrifying than Jesus in wrath. He found sitting in the Temple sellers of oxen and sheep and doves, and changers of money. Then, having made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out, and their sheep and their oxen, and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew their tables, and to the dove-sellers He said : " Take these things hence ; My house shall be called the house of

prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." No one with the slightest knowledge of the grandeur and vastness of the Herodian temple, with the slightest knowledge of the fierce fanaticism and pride of priests and scribes who ruled therein, of the extent of traffic and trade in requisites for sacrifice, carried on within its precincts by commercial magnates, but will read these words with amazement. He will marvel that one man should have dared to do this and should not forthwith have paid for his audacity with his blood, that sheep and oxen, doves and tables, money and men should have been swept away by the storm of one man's anger.

Who has ever read Christ's denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees in the Gospel of St. Matthew and has not realized that in all literature there is no greater outpouring of wrath than this, no greater torrent of withering eloquence?—or rather not eloquence, for eloquence means forethought and skill and effort, and here we have only the spontaneous might and majesty of a mind using speech as a weapon to smite a cowardly crew of crawling, creeping hypocrites.

"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, ye devourers of widows' homes, for a pretence making long prayers, therefore shall ye receive the greater damnation!

"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye compass land and sea to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him doubly a child of hell, more so than yourselves!

"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and omit the weightier matters of the law, judgment,

mercy, faith. Ye blind guides, straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel!

"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but within ye are full of rapine and uncleanness.

"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye are like whited sepulchres, outwardly appearing to men beautiful, but within full of dead men's bones and all filthiness. You serpents, you generation of vipers, how will you flee from the judgment of hell?"

Read too the parable of the wicked husbandmen who slew the only son and heir. "What therefore," asked Christ, "shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? He shall come and destroy them, and give the vineyard to others." But they, when they heard it said: "God forbid!" Jesus fixed His eyes on them and said: "What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; and on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

As a mass of rock in its fall overwhelms those below, so, threatens Christ, will the weight of His coming wrath overwhelm the wicked. In the day of doom He will say to all doers of evil: "Go away from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

Popular imagination has gone astray in picturing the figure of Christ as exclusively one of tenderness, and almost of softness, as if no stern word would ever leave His lips, no flash of anger ever come from His eyes. People err because they have ceased to read the Gospel, or deliberately read only the words which they think favour their nebulous effeminate Christianity. The

historic Christ was so different. Jesus was indeed the Redeemer and the lover of souls, one meek and humble of heart, who on the Cross gladly gave His life for His friends; one whose love knits Him closer to us than the love of a brother, but Jesus was also King of men, of whom the prophet foretold: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

In others the possession of power and the wielding of might repel those around them, and fill them with dread akin to aversion. It was not so with Jesus. Drawn by His charm, five thousand people followed Him, not counting the women and children. They followed Him into the desert for three days, till they had nothing to eat, and the merciful eyes of the Man of Nazareth saw their need, had pity, and gave them plenty.

Thus in solitary greatness stands Jesus of Nazareth. True man indeed, yet more than man, for His character was a blending of perfections, in us never found together, perfections in high degree and yet in harmony, perfections so great and so holy that at first we would say with Peter: "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am but a sinful man," but soon, with Thomas, we sink on our knees and say: "O my Lord and my God!"

PART III

Chapter I
THE HYPOSTATIC UNION

Chapter II
THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

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CHAPTER I

THE HYPOSTATIC UNION

§1. *The Union considered in itself.*
§2. *Theories on the distinction between nature and person.*
§3. *Only the Second Person of the Trinity is man.*
§4. *God the Son did not change at the Incarnation.*
§5. *Why the Father or the Holy Ghost did not become man.*

In the Chapter entitled, " Statement of the Doctrine," we set forth the bare facts involved in the truth of the Incarnation, as taught and defined by the Catholic Church. We now wish to go further and study in detail the facts which God has deigned to reveal, that our study may bring us to a greater appreciation, and truer conception of the Mystery, so graciously made known to us by God's wisdom and mercy. Our task is fourfold. We must study the mystery of the Union itself, the Union of two natures in one Person or Hypostasis. We must study Christ's human nature thus united to God, and as human nature manifests itself in knowledge and will, we must study first the human knowledge and then the human will of Christ. Finally, as the Hypostatic Union is an everlasting one, continuing in heaven, we must see what it involves with regard to Christ's glorified humanity, in which He now sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

§ 1. *The Union considered in itself.*

Starting from the fact that Christ is one Person in two natures, how have we to conceive, express, and picture to ourselves that ineffable Union? We have no idle wish to invade the mystery itself, we only wish to state as truly and adequately as we may, what it is that God has revealed. There is no parallel to the Hypostatic Union within our experience, but we may look for some analogies, serving to make clearer what our Faith teaches us about the Hypostatic Union.

As an illustration, which may throw some light on the union of the two natures in Christ, we might use the well-known custom of engrafting, practised on trees. Supposing a beautiful rose is engrafted on a common briar, the tree will produce its own simple flowers, but along with them beautiful roses also. Or supposing a pear tree is engrafted on an apple tree, it will bear both apples and pears. That means that it will have a twofold kind of life and nature, but there will be only one tree. The pears on that apple tree will live by the life of the apple tree, for there is but one tree, and one set of roots, and one source of life. Thus the very life of the apple tree will course through the pears, though they are not apples but pears. The pears owe the fact of their life and existence to the apple tree. There is but one thing they have not in common with the apples that is—forgive the expression—their pear-nature, their pear-hood.

If by an effort of the imagination we endow our apple tree with intelligent consciousness, and fancy we touch the tree by one of the pears and ask, Who are you? our fairy tree would answer: I am the apple tree; if we ask: What then are you, the answer would

be, I am the pear you touch, but I am also the apple which you might touch with the other hand. The fact is, I possess two natures : applehood and pearhood, though I have but one life and am but one tree.

If we apply this humble comparison to the sublime mystery of the Incarnation, we may say that Christ's humanity is engrafted on the divine personality. It receives life, being and existence itself from God, not merely by creation, but by participation, and none the less, it always remains pure manhood. Its essence or nature is not changed, although it accepts its existence or subsistence from God the Son ; yet God the Son and that human nature constitute one single person in two natures, one single being which is divine in existence, but divine and human in nature, one single Christ, who is both God and man.

To speak of Christ's human nature being engrafted on God is, of course, to use an inadequate and perhaps clumsy metaphor. This metaphor if stressed too much, might even be misleading, but it can also serve a good purpose as a faint adumbration in the material world of a higher reality in the supernatural and spiritual world.

There is another comparison which has aided many people in understanding of the mystery of the union of the two natures. Once more it is only a comparison, only an analogy, and must not be too far pressed. Every comparison fails in some point. But it is a comparison which is sanctioned in the Church's liturgy, for it occurs in the Athanasian creed.

As the rational soul and the body is one man, so God and man is one Christ. Soul and body, matter and spirit combine in man to form one single person, who

is at once material and spiritual. My soul is I, but my body is I likewise, as long as life lasts. At death it ceases to be I, because it is no longer matter owned, controlled, possessed, and constituted in its specific human reality, by my soul. My body is not merely the house in which my soul dwells, as in a foreign tenement: It is not merely the vesture or clothing of my soul. It is actually I myself. He that hurts my body hurts me; he that cherishes my body cherishes me. The deeds of my body, seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting and smelling are my deeds. At death I shall cease in a sense to be my complete self, until at the resurrection I, that is, my imperfect self, my soul, shall resume the body and I shall again be completely "man," and no longer a being imperfect and shorn of some of its proper nature, a disembodied human soul. All this helps us to realize that in us two principles of reality meet, the spiritual and the material. Body and soul are welded together in so close a union that they constitute one single individual being, a "man." This is the closest union of two principles of reality which we know on earth, and it helps us a little to understand the mystery of the Incarnation. Christ is one single subsistent reality in which the person of God the Son is wedded to a human nature. Christ and God the Son are not TWO, but ONE, in some way as my body and my soul are not two things, but one thing, *man*.

On the other hand, we must never forget that this is only a comparison, and that there remain essential points of difference between the mystery of the union of the natures in Christ and the union of body and soul in man. In man this union produces a compound

nature, for it is the union of two principles of reality, of which each is imperfect and which coalesce in a higher unity, the human. In Christ the union is between two complete natures, which do not coalesce into a third complete and compound nature.

In Christ there is no coalescing of the human with the divine, so as to produce a third something, a divine-human nature. The two natures do not compound, but they are united by the personality of the first. The divine person extends His subsistence, individuality, or personality, to the human nature, and thus constitutes it in the realm of reality.

§2. *Theories on the distinction between nature and person.*

Metaphysicians have endeavoured to probe still deeper into the distinction between nature and person and their speculations are of interest to readers of an abstract turn of mind who wish to state the mystery with scientific precision. Hence we add them for completeness' sake, though they leave the essence of the mystery unchanged. These metaphysicians have asked themselves, in the last analysis what is it that constitutes " Personality" ?

Some have answered : it is nothing in itself positive, it is merely the being-in-itself, by itself, and for itself, of a rational nature, the mere fact of being completely " self-contained," ultimately and solely responsible for one's own actions. Personality is the mere fact that being concrete a nature does *NOT share* its being with any other being ; that it stands *ALONE*, distinct from all other things that are. Now standing *ALONE* is no positive quality, lonesomeness, by-itself-ness, is

nothing positive, it is just the absence of companions, or sharers in being. The human nature in Christ forms no human person (so they say) because it does not stand alone, it is not self-contained, not independently responsible. It is not the complete originator of its actions, and the ultimate principle of attribution. The human nature of Christ leans on the divine Person, it is His and not its own. He is responsible, He is the first originator and ultimate principle of attribution. It receives subsistency from Him and is therefore not by itself, in itself and for itself alone. In other words it is no human person or individual, but the human nature of another person, viz., God the Son.

Other metaphysicians, however, assert that personality is not merely negative, that it is a real positive perfection, a distinct principle of reality, which must be added to a nature to constitute a person. It is a special and unique perfection by which a human nature is rendered incommunicable. Personality is not the mere fact that being *IS NOT* shared, but that it *CANNOT BE* shared. This perfection is something intrinsic, by which it is rendered impossible to be shared. This theory has the disadvantage of involving that Christ's human nature lacks something positive, whereas Christ's nature is complete and perfect of its own kind.

A third set of metaphysicians argue that all concrete created being arises out of a combination of two principles of reality, viz., essence and existence. In other words, all things are the concurrence of two ingredients of reality: (1) the principle by which a thing receives that which it is, and (2) the principle by which a thing receives that it is, or existence.

This may seem very abstruse, but a simple example will explain it. I have a sovereign in my hand and I say: "This is gold." I am really giving expression to two concepts: first the concept: existence: This *is*; secondly gold-ness, or the nature or essence of gold. I modify the former by the latter. Nothing created can be grasped or expressed by the statement that it *is*; nothing merely *is*, it is *something*, it has some particular specified nature or essence. A silver shilling has what a golden sovereign has, it has the act or fact of existence, but it has not the same essence, not the same size or the same metallic nature. Hence, in every concrete thing two aspects of reality reveal themselves, which I might express by the barbarous terms of "what" ness and "that" ness, essence and existence. Now, individuality in irrational, or personality in rational natures, is merely the act of existence itself. We need no further superadded perfection. The fact of its existence is the fact of its personality. In other words, for a man the mere fact of his existence as a rational creature constitutes his personality.

The human nature of Christ is also personal, of course, but its personality is not human, because the act of its existence is the act of existence of God the Son; because God the Son extends His existence to the human nature. It is exactly and literally and formally true, that God the Son *is* man. "Is" means "exists" or existence; God the Son has existence as man, the infinite existence of God the Son embraces or holds manhood. Jesus of Nazareth is God, because the existence of Jesus of Nazareth is the very existence of God, though His essence, or human nature, is not.

The existence of God the Son is in itself indeed eternal, but in time a human essence or nature met it, or was drawn to it, in the embrace of reality, and through that meeting received being and was and is Jesus of Nazareth.

The fourth metaphysical theory is very similar to the third. It accepts the real distinction between essence and existence, but does not hold that the act of existence is in itself subsistency. It demands three perfections—essence, subsistence and existence. The last perfection gives actuality, the second perfection completes the first and is itself completed by the third. These metaphysicians claim that existence by itself only actualizes the essence ; but there is nothing in an essence to render it incommunicable, hence they postulate a certain reality, added to the essence before it is actualized, to be a person.

Each of these theories has something in its favour and something in which it is inadequate and fails as an ultimate analysis. The third theory seems, on the whole, to come nearest to the truth, the first seems the weakest. But whatever theory we favour, let us remember that it is only an attempt to understand a little better the distinction of nature and person. The fact of such a distinction is a matter of common knowledge, and it is on the simple fact of this distinction that the mystery rests, no matter what metaphysical theory we adopt to explain it. Hence it is only a question of scientific interest we have been studying without immediate bearing on the mystery itself of the Incarnation.

This mystery remains ultimately unfathomable and beyond our reason, though not against it. It is precisely impatience with mysteries which in the past

has led and to-day still leads men, not to explain the Incarnation, but to explain it away, or to reject it entirely. The Modernist will say that Chalcedon means nothing to him, whatever it may have meant to people of the fifth century. He sets it aside, so he says, not because he denies it, but because he finds it unintelligible. In reality a mystery must in itself always remain unintelligible in the last resort, otherwise it would be no mystery. The modern man brooks no mysteries in religion, though the more he progresses in science, the more he must realize that he is surrounded by natural mysteries. He must become aware that there are endless facts of which he knows that they are, but how they are he does not know, and every explanation he tries ends in an antinomy. The physicist is asked how and why electricity acts as it acts, and he has no answer. He does not know whether electricity is a mere movement and force or a fluid of some kind. Whatever theory he adopts, it ends in an apparent impossibility.

A psychologist is asked how the mental and the material interact, and he has no answer. They do as a matter of fact, but how, he cannot tell, and any explanation ends in an antinomy. So likewise with a supernatural mystery : God reveals that it is so, but how it is we cannot adequately explain. We can see only that it is not against reason. There is nothing which our reason is compelled to reject as evident untruth, but there is a great deal which reason must acknowledge to be beyond its utmost power.

So it is with the special Mystery of the Incarnation. How one person can have two natures is beyond our utmost power to explain. We acknowledge that God

has revealed that it is so, and there is nothing in our reason which would compel us to reject that divine statement as self-contradictory. It is in no sense self-contradictory, for a person obviously is not a nature, hence there is no reason in the essence of things why one person should not be joined by several natures.

As in the statement: Jesus is God as well as man, the term God indicates an infinite being, it is only natural that our finite minds cannot grasp the full import of the truth uttered.

The four metaphysical theories of necessity all leave the mystery itself unexplained. If they only bring home to us the limitations of our intelligence, which we often forget, they already achieve a useful purpose.

§3. *Only the Second Person of the Trinity is man.*

Catholic Faith teaches us not only that God became man, but that it is God the Son, not God the Father or the Holy Ghost, who became man. Let us consider this precise aspect of our faith. In considering it, we cannot but enter on another field of research, the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. As this present treatise deals with the Incarnation, we must restrict ourselves by accepting as proven and explained certain theses of the treatise on the Trinity.

We believe that God is one, that He is one, single, individual, concrete, infinite, immutable nature and reality, undivided and indivisible, utterly one. Yet this one, infinite, concrete, reality is held, or possessed in a threefold way. It exists in Three Persons—Father, Son and Holy Ghost. These three, though completely distinct, subsist in one and the same concrete being and nature of God. There is but one God,

and the Father is that one and only God, as underived, and unbegotten, as source and origin of the other two Persons. He is the Original of which the Son is the image, and is, jointly with the Son, the source of the Holy Ghost. The Son, too, is that one and only God, but as derived and begotten from the Father as the image and utterance of the Father, and jointly with the Father the source of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is that same one and only God, but as derived and breathed out by the Father and the Son and thus the fulfilment and completion of the Godhead.

Thus much we accept and take over as explained and understood from the treatise on the Trinity.

Father, Son and Holy Ghost are distinct persons, though they share the same concrete individual nature. Of this mystery we have no parallel or analogy whatever on earth. Three human persons share the same generic nature of manhood, but not the identical concrete nature of *this* manhood. Peter, Paul and John are three distinct persons, but they are also three distinct men. If all three, though remaining completely distinct, had one and the same manhood we should have a parallel to the Trinity, in which Father, Son and Spirit are distinct, yet are the same God. The mystery is completely beyond our understanding, but God has revealed it and we accept it as true.

Now in the mystery of the Incarnation it has been further revealed that God the Son alone, and not the Father or the Spirit, has become man.

What does this mean ?

First of all we must be quite certain about this.

Although, within the Godhead, Fatherhood, Sonship and Spirithood are distinct, yet all the works of God *outwards, ad extra,* as the theologians say, are common to the three Persons. All that is created is equally the effect of the three Persons in the Godhead. All created things are the limited termini of the infinite power of God. The Father does nothing "outwards" which the Son and the Spirit do not also do. There is nothing in this Universe whose existence is due to one Person alone, without being due to the Other Divine Persons. Even the Sacred Manhood of Christ, as a work of God "outwards" as something created and distinct from the Godhead, is the effect of the Creative Will of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. God the Son did not create a human nature by Himself alone, without the concurrence of the two Other Persons. As a creative act it is common to all Three. How, then, is God the Son alone man? Because He alone is the personality which completes or terminates, and gives subsistence to, Christ's human nature. He alone assumed it unto Himself, He alone possesses it as His own. The infinite divine act of existence, which is God, extends towards and holds the Human Nature and constitutes it in the realm of reality; but God, who does so, is God as Son, not the First or the Third, Person in the Blessed Trinity.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us. The Word is God the Son.

This is utterly mysterious to us. St. Bonaventure has a simple, tender, and gracious similitude, which may aid us a little in grasping what is meant. He represents three virgins occupied in vesting a bride

for her nuptials, but one of the three virgins is the bride herself, hence, though all three are equally occupied, yet one alone is clothed in the bridal garment. So, saith the Saint, the Godhead was vested with our humanity, all Three Persons concurred in one common operation in vesting God the Son with this robe with which He alone is vested. He therefore is vesting Himself, while Father and Holy Ghost are vesting Him.

§4. *God the Son did not change at the Incarnation.*

Perhaps an inquisitive mind might ask: Did not then, at the Incarnation, at least God the Son change by becoming man, whereas we know that God is immutable and changeless? In speaking of God the Son assuming, holding, and possessing a human nature, of the Word *becoming* man, we of necessity use human expressions, which seem to involve a change in God the Son, as if He were beginning to be what he was not before. But this is due to our imperfection of speech and thought. With us all activity means change. It is not so with God. The created thing indeed begins to be, but its relation to God as Cause establishes nothing new in God. If the questioner insists that at least in the Incarnation God the Son became something He was not before, we would remind him that though we use the phrase "extending the act of existence to the human nature," we must not be misunderstood. We are hampered by the limitation of language. The infinite cannot extend beyond itself, for unto the infinite there is nothing "beyond." The infinite "includes" but does not "extend."

The Sacred Humanity of Christ began to be included in the act of existence of God the Son, the Humanity

of Christ became actualised and individualised by the union to the Person of God the Son, but God the Son did not change. A child may run to its mother and nestle in her bosom, but the mother does not therefore necessarily change. When the Manhood of Christ leapt into being, it nestled in the bosom of the Godhead, for its personality, the most intrinsic constituent part of its own self, was God the Son. None the less, God the Son did not change because the Manhood began to be in the embrace of His own Personality. It is true, the divine Personality, notwithstanding His own impenetrability, seized, penetrated, and immersed Himself in the human nature, and thus became and now is God-incarnate, God-man. But it is the Manhood which is thus pervaded and penetrated, thus invaded and held, by the Infinite Person without shadow or shade of alteration in the Godhead.

A humble comparison may perchance not be out of place, though all comparisons are feeble and utterly inadequate. When the magnet is joined to the iron, it is the iron that undergoes the change, being held and gripped by the magnet. The magnet does not —at least apparently—change, or receive modification, by the iron coming within the ambit of its attractive force. The magnet unites the iron to itself without—at least perceptible—alteration. It is the iron which from a dull cold state becomes magnetized, and begins to be what it was not. Thus in the Incarnation a human nature was created, and in being created was assumed to the Person of God the Son, who united it to Himself for ever. God the Son thus became man, though He did not alter.

§5. *Why the Father or the Holy Ghost did not become man.*

The curiosity of the human mind has further asked, whether the Father or the Holy Ghost could have become man? Undoubtedly, for the root of the possibility of assuming a second nature lies in the infinitude of the person. All three divine persons are equally infinite, hence all three could have become man.

Why, then, it is further asked, did not the Father or the Holy Spirit become incarnate rather than the Son?

To this we can give no certain answer, for God has only revealed the fact, and not the reason why the Son became incarnate.

But reverent speculation has tried to find the reason both in the mystery of the Trinity and in the purpose of the Incarnation. There is a seeming incongruity in God the Father, the Source and Head of the Divinity, becoming a Son of Man and thus reversing in a created nature the very characteristic of His Personality. God-Incarnate was to be the Redeemer, the Mediator between God and man, and it seems fitting that He should be God the Son, who is intermediate within the Godhead, and through whom all things are made. Man, through sin, had ceased to be the adopted Son of God. Therefore it seems becoming that he should be restored and should receive back the charter of his adoption by God the Son, who is by nature, and within God, what man was by grace and in created similitude. God the Son is the image and manifestation of the Father. Therefore it seems in keeping that he should be the manifestation of God in manhood and the pattern for all the sons of men. The Son is the Word and the utterance of the Father. Therefore

it seems natural that it should be He who would utter the word of pardon to men, when He, the Son of God, had suffered for sinners, who were his brethren according to the flesh. It seems less congruous that the Holy Spirit should become man, considering that He, as the personified and subsistent holiness of God, should rather be the terminus of the reconciliation than the intermediary. Hence the Redemption and Atonement having taken place, there seems a divine fitness in the Holy Ghost being sent to sanctify our souls.

In these sublime matters, however, we realize that we are but stammering feeble words, as soon as we leave the certainty of God's direct revelation and are trusting to our unaided reason. We have only repeated here what has occurred to saintly and learned minds in this matter.

CHAPTER II

THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

§1. *Man's threefold knowledge.*
§2. *Christ's possession of the Beatific Vision.*
§3. *Compatibility of sorrow with the Beatific Vision.*
§4. *Christ's infused knowledge.*
§5. *Christ's natural human knowledge.*
§6. *Christ's knowledge of the day of judgment.*

§1. *Man's threefold knowledge.*

MAN is capable of a threefold knowledge. By an entirely supernatural and divine gift, a gift which exceeds all man's natural needs and powers, a gift which through God's free and infinite bounty will be bestowed on the just in heaven, man will be capable of seeing God face to face, even as He is in Himself.

The possibility of this knowledge is a great mystery. This mystery has been revealed to us in God's promise of the Beatific Vision to man. We cannot here enter into further explanations. It is discussed at length in a treatise on the Afterlife by the present writer. Suffice it to say that this knowledge, though finite, as the act of a created being must ever be, is a direct and immediate perception of the Infinite God without any intermediary whatever.

The next kind of knowledge which man can possess is infused knowledge such as God naturally gives to

Angels and sometimes, supernaturally, to some Saints on earth. It is called intuitive, because it is obtained by no process of reasoning, but, as it were, at a glance, by a flash of intelligence. This knowledge is natural to Angels, but not so to man. When given to man, it is called infused, because it is not obtained by the exercise of his natural human powers, but is poured into his mind from without by a miraculous intervention of God. Prophets, Saints and Seers knew things which no human endeavour could have made known to them, but which God by direct action on their minds caused them to know.

Lastly, man has his natural knowledge, which he acquires by experience during his life in this world. This normal knowledge increases as years advance, as through his senses his contact with the outer world continues, and through his power of reasoning he makes progress in the way of truth.

Apart from Christ's infinite knowledge as God, Christ's human soul on earth possessed this threefold knowledge as man.

§2. *Christ's possession of the Beatific Vision.*

Christ soul on earth saw God face to face. No mortal man while on earth has ever seen God except Jesus Christ. When Jesus spoke to the Jews about His divine Father, He spoke to them not as of One Whom He only knew in the obscurity of an act of faith, One in Whom His human soul merely believed, but as of One Whom He saw face to face. He could say to the Pharisees : " Ye have not known Him, and if I should say, I know Him not, I should be like unto you, a liar : but I know Him and keep His word."

Christ is here evidently speaking as man, and in His human nature, for only as man can He be said " to keep His Father's word," only as man had He said just before : " If I honour myself, My honour is nothing, it is my Father that honoureth me, of whom you say, that He is your God." St. Leo the Great, the doctor of the mystery of the Incarnation, told us with majestic precision fifteen hundred years ago that, " as the divine nature, one and unchangeable, is ever complete in its own essence, never either lessening or increasing, so likewise it beatified the human nature which It assumed in order that His glorified nature should always remain in the embrace of Him who glorified it." Indeed, given the fact of the personal union of the human nature of Christ with God the Son, it stands to reason that that human nature by the gift of the Beatific Vision should see God face to face.

Personal union is unspeakably greater than Beatific Vision, and one cannot imagine that God should grant the greater and not the less. In the abstract perhaps it is possible for God to assume a human nature and give to His human mind only the obscure knowledge of faith, not of sight, it is difficult to argue about the abstract possibilities of God's absolute power in a mystery like this. It seems, however, so incongruous and is so abhorrent from the common belief of the Catholic Church, that no Catholic could safely hold such an extraordinary opinion. Christ's Beatific Vision has been so obvious to all, that within the Church no heretical view has ever arisen about this point, and hence it has never as yet been defined by Pope or Council in solemn definition. If we held the opposite, we should have to give way to strange and repellent

imaginings. We should have to imagine that Christ as man in His human mind knew indeed that His human nature was not self-subsistent, and had no human personality, but that He would not, as man, directly see or know but only believe in the Person, who had assumed His nature.

The obvious and the only way the Church has ever known of conceiving the mystery is that Christ's human soul on earth always saw the face of God as the Blessed do in heaven. In God Christ saw that His nature was possessed and held by God, and was God's own. His divine Person was so united to His human nature and so pervaded it, that by the necessity of intrinsic congruity He bestowed upon it what we hope He will bestow upon us in a lesser degree, when after life we shall see His unveiled Majesty.

True, great difficulties remain, but mysteries must always remain in the divine revelation that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

§3. *Compatibility of sorrow with the Beatific Vision.*

Christ saw the face of God, how then could He suffer? Is not the sight of God face to face, called the Beatific Vision or blissful sight, and does it not render those who possess it perfectly blessed and happy? If Christ's soul was steeped in the inebriating happiness of the immediate enjoyment of God, how could He say at the entrance of the garden of Gethsemane: "My soul is sorrowful unto death?"

The mystery is indeed great. Perhaps we can dimly see how He could undergo physical pain, how the nails would still hurt, and the burning thirst still torment even though His soul was with God, but how could His

soul itself be sorrowful unto death, how could He cry over Lazarus His friend, and Jerusalem His city, how could He feel sadness and indignation at Judas' kiss, since His soul possessed the supreme happiness of the Beatific Vision ?

It is a problem which no one has ever fully solved, and which is perhaps insoluble for us here on earth, because it enters into the very essence of the mystery of the Incarnation, and therefore must always escape even the utmost endeavours of our mind during our mortal pilgrimage.

Let us, however, in deep reverence try to enter into the innermost sanctuary of the human soul of Christ, and see whether perhaps our humble endeavours to understand may bear some fruit.

Christ in His agony was sorrowful unto death, so that great drops of His blood fell to the ground in Gethsemane, and yet Christ's soul saw the face of God, and this blissful sight suffused His soul with unspeakable happiness.

When the Blessed in heaven see God, they can sorrow no more. It stands written of them : " God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away."

Christ's soul was closer to God than theirs, His happiness immeasurably deeper than theirs, but by a unique dispensation of God's Providence Christ had still a mortal body and was surrounded by the sorrows of life. Indeed He was " the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was smitten of God and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our sins." " He saw the travail of His

soul," when "He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, when the chastisement of us all was laid upon Him." We have dealt already with the meaning of Christ's cry on the Cross. Most readers will find in the consideration of those words at least some aid in studying the mystery of sorrow in Christ's soul. If we must deal with the matter in an abstract and more technical way, we would say that the act of seeing God and the act of enjoyment of final consummated human happiness are not identical. Christ's possession of the former does not prove His possession of the latter.

The Blessed before the Day of Judgment possess the Beatific Vision, yet they are not completely finally happy with the utmost measure of happiness till they possess their bodies after the Resurrection, because they have not come to the complete consummation of their manhood, owing to this very lack of body. This shows that the Beatific Vision is compatible with some unfulfilled desire, with some lack of happiness. It is therefore in itself possible to see God and have sorrow. The sorrow would arise, not of course from seeing God, but from seeing oneself still in some sense exposed or accessible to evil and pain. To see the Creator is in itself not the same as to see His creation, though creation be mirrored in Him. The sight of God gives essential happiness, but this happiness may not be totally consummated, owing to the fact of some imperfect state of him who receives it.

If someone could comprehend God fully, then of course he would share fully God's own divine happiness, but no finite intelligence, not even Christ's human

mind, can comprehend God fully. Christ indeed had the Beatific Vision in a higher degree than any of the Seraphim and Cherubim, but even His knowledge did not encompass and completely grasp God. Between the infinite and the finite there ever must be an infinite distance.

Christ's mind was vast beyond that of any other created intelligence. It is the common teaching in the Catholic Church that Christ knew all God's actual creation, past, present and future, and thus Christ also saw Himself as man in the Beatific Vision, and He saw Himself in exile here below. For God assumed a human nature, not in consummated glory, but in its pilgrim-state. His human nature was, through the mortality and possibility of its body, still an exile from heaven and a sojourner on earth, and subject to all the woes our fallen nature is liable to. The Beatific Vision did indeed make Christ essentially happy with the happiness of the Blessed, but mirrored in the divinity Christ saw His own assumed human nature as it then was, shorn of the fulness of its glory, in its earthly and mortal state. He saw it accessible to manifold ills ; pains of the body, and torments on the Cross, pains of soul : the bereavement of friends, the ingratitude of those who shared human nature with Him, the sight of the sufferings of those whom He loved.

Let no one conclude that Christ while on earth suffered because He did not know the solution of the problem of evil, or was ignorant of the gracious plans of God's redemption ; or because He did not know in the Beatific Vision that for Him as pilgrim on earth the possibility of sorrow was not yet excluded. When Christ after death entered into His glory all sorrow

ended, because the light of glory showed Him in God that, though sin is evil, it no longer approached Him, and was therefore no evil to Him, for He had gone beyond the limitations of earthly life. Was then Christ's sadness an imperfection of His soul? No, it was the highest perfection, in that state of human nature which He deigned to assume, and His very sadness was a manifestation of His holiness in presence of evil, and proof of the reality of His manhood, exiled on earth. That He deigned to see evil, even as we see it on earth, and to be saddened by it, is due to the depth of His condescension to the children of men. Had He not done so, had He not taken a passible and mortal nature, His earthly life would have been a make-believe, and though He would still have been man, He would not have been like unto us here on earth.

But we have perhaps presumed to search too deeply into the hallowed secrets of Christ's inner life.

We know that however fierce the storms that beat upon the surface of Christ's human soul, however high the waves of sorrow that arose in His Sacred Heart, the innermost depth of His human nature was in utmost peace and joy. His whole being was rooted in the Godhead, God the Son embraced it and held it in personal union, and His whole being was illuminated by the heavenly light of God's unveiled Face.

Both Christ's sorrows and His joys were great beyond what we can express or conceive. How they once co-existed in the human soul of God the Son we can fully learn only hereafter.

§4. *Christ's infused knowledge.*

Besides the Light of Glory, theologians usually hold that Christ possessed infused knowledge. That is to say, He did not merely see things mirrored in God, but He knew things as they were in themselves, and He knew them through a special gift from God granting Him this knowledge. It was foretold of Him in the Prophet (Isaias xi, 2): "the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord." These gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel and knowledge rested on His human soul in their plenitude, and by virtue of these gifts He knew all things through and through. He possessed knowledge even of the hidden secrets of God's Providence in so far as their knowledge was needed for the work of the Redemption and was becoming to the human soul of God. In this knowledge He could read the thoughts of men as an open book, and the story of the past, the present and the future was to him like a scroll, unfolded to the end. As God-man He had a claim to the most perfect knowledge of which His soul was capable, and as this claim is based on the fact of the personal union of that soul with God, He possessed it from the first moment of the Hypostatic Union, and the Babe of Bethlehem was wiser than a plenary council of all the angels of God.

Error and ignorance do not befit God, even in His human nature. That Christ could have erred about anything whatever is repudiated by our Christian consciousness as unbeseeming the dignity and veracity of God the Son.

The double gift of the Beatific Vision and of super-

natural infused knowledge Christ possessed from the first moment of the Incarnation. He possessed it even in His Mother's womb, for this knowledge is the natural outcome and accompaniment of the union itself of the human nature to the Person of God. It was therefore complete from the beginning and incapable of increase.

§5. *Christ's natural human knowledge.*

There was, however, a third kind of knowledge which Christ possessed, which grew and waxed in intensity and extent during the years of His mortal life, from His birth to His death. This is mere natural, experimental, human knowledge. The Babe saw and learnt to recognise things around Him, the Babe heard and gradually learnt the language of His Mother, the Babe stretched out His hands and by touching things began to know their nature and their properties. The Boy learnt the carpenter's trade from Joseph, His foster father. The Man of Nazareth travelled through Judea, Galilee and Samaria and got to know cities and scenes, men and women, in a way He had not known them before. Because of this progress in merely human knowledge He could ask and learn, He could marvel and feel surprise and disappointment. He was truly human, and without such real increase of knowledge His life upon earth would have been utterly unlike ours, and a pretence from babyhood to death.

It is quite true that He could never err, not even in this merely experimental knowledge, for to err does not belong to the essence of human nature on earth, and to err is against the dignity of a Divine Person.

The proverb indeed says that to err is human, but the proverb speaks of fallen nature, wounded by sin, and therefore liable not merely to ignorance but to mistake and error. The proverb speaks of human nature as we historically know it in ourselves and our neighbours, not of perfect sinless human nature as God meant it to be.

But how could Christ's mind at once know and not know? How could He know a thing mirrored in the Godhead through the Beatific Vision and by infused intuitive knowledge and yet at the same time not know it with ordinary human knowledge? This must remain a mystery to us. We on earth have only one mode and method of knowledge. We cannot imagine what it is to have two or three. Our reason tells us that there can be other kinds of knowledge than our own, but what another kind of knowledge is like, and how it co-exists in the mind together with ordinary knowledge, we cannot say, for we have no experience of it, and it is completely beyond what we can picture to ourselves.

St. Paul or St. Theresa might help us perhaps a little. St. Paul was caught up into the third heaven and heard secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter. God had granted him knowledge of another than the ordinary kind, whether in the body or out of the body, St. Paul knew not. Merely human knowledge can be somehow expressed in human speech, however inadequate, but what St. Paul had seen was beyond utterance. Even if St. Paul had found words, we could not have understood.

St. Theresa and other Saints sometimes saw Christ and His Mother and the Blessed in heaven, but when these privileged Saints were asked precisely what they

saw, the features of Christ, and His stature or the colour of His garments, they often smiled and said they had not seen Him in that way, they just knew, knew His Presence, His Glory and His Word, but they did not know it in our way.

On Easter morn the risen Christ, so it is piously believed, was first made manifest to His Blessed Mother, and yet the Scripture saith that He first appeared to Mary Magdalen, and the Scripture cannot be broken. The manifestation to His Mother was therefore of another kind. The Magdalen and the women and the apostles touched Christ's hands and His feet, but there are higher kinds of knowledge still. When, later on, His Mother also saw Him with her bodily eyes, she indeed rejoiced too with the other apostles, for by a new avenue she then approached the reality of her risen Son, whereas in a more sublime way she had known her risen Son already.

Some remote analogy can perhaps also be found in our more humble experience. Imagine an architect who has drawn the minutest plans of a building, has specified all the materials, determined every line and curve and colour of the house to be erected, but who is prevented from seeing the building during its erection. Years later he has at last the chance of seeing the house he built. On approaching it he can say: "I know it already: in a sense there is nothing new for me to know. I know the number and the colour of the bricks, the thickness of the wood, the number, size and place of the nails, I know the shape of the windows and their situation. I know every lock and every hinge, in fact I know the house better than the man who lives in it, for I conceived it and the building as it

stands is but the realization of my thought." Yet almost every architect in such a case would walk up to the house with interest and pace through every corridor and room. On leaving he would say: "I knew it before, but I have added to my knowledge, for now I know it in another way."

This example is not quite similar to Christ's manifold knowledge. From the nature of the case there cannot be an exact parallel to Christ's different ways of knowing. Still, this example may aid us a little to realize that there was nothing artificial or unnatural in Christ's human life, that in no sense whatever it was a pretence, or as the playing of a part in a theatre, where one's rôle is learnt by heart. With eager anticipation, through marvel and pain and sorrow, with free deliberation, moving forward step by step, Christ walked through this valley of tears, through this land of exile, till He could say: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do, and now glorify thou me, Father, with the glory which I had with thee, before the world was made."

§6. *Christ's knowledge of the day of judgment.*

But does not Christ, at least in one specified instance, clearly and unmistakably admit ignorance? Speaking of the Day of Judgment, does He not acknowledge: "Of that day or hour no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father?" Granted that the words refer not to Christ in His divine nature, which is omniscient, they refer to Him at least in His human nature, and seemingly no words could be a plainer acknowledgment of ignorance than the words of this text. The answer is simple. Christ

did not know it with specifically human, and therefore communicable knowledge.

Now this answer must not be misunderstood. It does not mean that Christ used a mental reservation, as if He really knew, but was not allowed to tell and therefore by some " economy of truth," said the thing that was not; said "I do not know," meaning only that He did know, but would not tell; perhaps somewhat in the way in which a priest, being asked a question touching the secret of the confessional, would boldly say: " I do not know." Such is not the meaning of Christ's words. A priest who would, to shield the secrecy of the Confessional, say, " I do not know," has all the same in his normal human consciousness, normal human knowledge acquired through normal human intercourse, of the fact, which he says he does not know. The priest may be justified in his utterance. That is not the point here.

The case with Our Lord is totally different.

He knew not only by different sources of information, but His knowledge was actually of different kinds. The Beatific Vision and the knowledge of things mirrored in the Beatific Vision is one thing. Infused intuitive knowledge such as the angels have is a different thing. Finally, normal human acquired knowledge gathered from sense-data, and extended by reasoning, is again a different thing. It is true all three kinds of knowledge did exist in the same human mind of Christ as its subject, but this does not alter the fact. Now, knowledge of the higher kind may be unutterable, incommunicable in the lower, specifically human knowledge.

Christ possessed in His normal human consciousness,

first, those things which He had acquired by normal human endeavour, and next, all those things which were communicated from His higher modes of knowledge. These things alone were utterable and communicable to others, and thus could be revealed by Christ to His fellowmen.

One may object: "Surely, if the end of the world is to come on the 31st of December, 1927, and Christ knew the date, why could He not tell? We answer that historic dates in past and future are names for moments in the time series of things here below, but in God there is no time series. God sees all things in the eternal now. Through the Beatific Vision things are seen in God as in a mirror. The human mind that sees the last day in the everlasting present of God knows it indeed in that supernatural mode of knowledge, but we cannot argue that the same mind must therefore know it in normal human knowledge and be able to communicate his knowledge to his fellowmen. "Of that day no man knows, not even the Son," expresses truth and fact, and is not a deceptive statement. During Christ's mortal life, not all knowledge which was in the higher regions of His soul flowed over into His normal human life as wayfarer upon this earth. Hence as mere man (outside that sphere of beatific and infused knowledge which was the necessary outcome of the Incarnation) He did not know some things, as for instance the date of the Day of Judgment, though He knew them as God, and knew them even as man in a supernatural mode of knowledge. According to the Aristotelian theory of knowledge, which is adopted by St. Thomas and the Scholastics, and is endorsed by modern

thinkers, and indeed is the expression of common sense, there is nothing in the human intellect which has not in the first instance been derived from the senses. The specific activity of the human mind is precisely to work on sense-data, and from those data to build up, through judgments and reasonings, ever-increasing knowledge.

Now Christ was truly man. If He had not exercised this specific activity of the human mind, He would not have been truly man. However great Christ's knowledge through the Beatific Vision and through infusion, it remained knowledge of a different kind from the specifically human knowledge. Though existing in Christ's mind as in its subject, it was not itself specifically human knowledge and without another avenue to reality, viz., the avenue of the senses and the reasoning built thereon, Christ's life would not have been human, like ours. Now we know that Christ was "found in habit as man," therefore He knew in our ordinary human way of knowing. But in such ordinary human way He did not know the date of the Day of Judgment.

We are always tempted to think that the different spheres of knowledge are only different in the category of the objects known, whereas they differ also in the very mode of knowing. These things are difficult for us to follow, because they are beyond the sphere of our own experience. But given the possibility of different modes of knowledge, our reason can see that a thing may be unknown in a lower sphere though known in the higher, and that even while Christ's soul and conscience remained an absolute unity, Christ could truly know and yet also in another sense not know the Day of Judgment.

It is remarkable that after the Resurrection, in answer to the query of the Apostles regarding the future, Christ only answers : " It is not *yours* to know !'[5] All knowledge was then completely His, even in His normal, natural consciousness and in a human way.

CHAPTER III

THE WILL OF CHRIST

§1. *Christ's free will and temptation.*
§2. *Christ's free will and merit.*
§3. *Christ's free will and the Father's command.*
§4. *Christ's Omnipotence and the Prayer of Petition.*
§5. *The Agony in the Garden.*

CHRIST possessed two wills, a divine will because He was God, and a human will because He was man.

Christ's human will was free, but Christ knew no sin. Both statements are obvious. If Christ's human will was not free, He was not really man; if Christ knew sin, He was not really God, for no divine person can sin.

§1. *Christ's free will and temptation.*

Christ had no original sin, for His human nature was united to the Godhead, and therefore necessarily supremely pleasing to God. Original sin, moreover, is propagated by normal generation, and Christ was virgin-born. Christ suffered in His human nature only the blameless consequences of original sin. Christ submitted to pain, sorrow and death because of Adam's sin, but He did not suffer from weakness of mind and consequent ignorance, nor from weakness of will and consequent proneness to evil, the two sad results of

original sin in our fallen nature. Christ therefore felt no internal temptation to anger or other sinful desire. Christ certainly felt anger, but it was never an uncontrollable passion ; it was holy indignation. Christ felt human love, tenderness and affection, but never any sensual and degrading desire.

Christ could be tempted, but only by external suggestion, not internally by the weakness of nature. We men, alas ! often dally with temptation. It costs us an inward struggle to overcome it, because we feel within us the power of its attraction. When temptation comes to us, either through the verbal suggestion of someone else, or through the written word or through something we see or hear, or through an imagination floating across our consciousness, we but rarely repel it instantly and with immediate horror, without feeling a secret hankering after it.

What happens to us but rarely was always and necessarily true in the case of Our Blessed Lord. What is only rare happiness to us was the perpetual frame of mind of Our Lord. The devil took Him into the desert, and the Gospel tells us of a threefold temptation there, but the suggestions of the Evil One never caused within Christ's soul what we mostly feel. I mean that swaying to and fro of the will, conscious of the magnetism exercised upon it by the evil thing, that uncertainty and anxiety lest the will should be overcome, that inward painful effort to maintain itself in goodness, to free itself of the baneful influence, and thus to conquer oneself as well as the evil thing without. The evil was indeed proposed to Our Lord ; His human soul, as it were, gazed at it, and understood it. He realized it as a possible object which a human

will might desire, and then, exercising His own will, He instantly cast it out as something which He did not will.

But if Christ could not possibly sin, how had He free will? We answer that God cannot sin, yet God is supremely free, hence the fact that Christ's human nature could not sin is no proof that it was not free. Possibility of sinning does not belong to the essence of freedom. Possibility of sinning is rather a deficiency of freedom and a failure of free will. We men on earth are still liable to sin, because we can still fail to put evil before our eyes in its true colours and see it as it is. We put it before us under the guise of good, and this *seeming* good we desire, for evil *as evil* no one can desire. It is this wilful disguising of evil as good and making it the object of our will, though we are conscious that, for all its momentary power to please, it ultimately works evil, that constitutes our sin. Sin is deliberate self-deception, and Christ's human nature was too perfect to be deceived. The Saints in heaven cannot sin, because they see God face to face. Christ could not sin, since He not only saw God face to face, but was united to Him in person.

What then did Christ's liberty consist in? In the choice between good and good, between one means to obtain His purpose and another, between all the myriad of possibilities in the life of man which present themselves for choice daily, hourly, nay continuously, without involving a choice between sin or virtue. Christ was not free in His wish to please His Father, but He was free in the various ways in which He could please Him.

§2. *Christ's free will and merit.*

But if Christ could not sin, how could He merit? Does not our redemption depend on Christ's power to merit it for us? Certainly it does. But let us see what Christ could merit. Christ could not merit the future Beatific Vision or possession of God as final reward, because Christ always had the Beatific Vision. He possessed God from the very first instant of the creation of His human soul. No one can merit what he already has. What Christ could merit for Himself was the consummation of His happiness by the glorification of His body.

"I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do, and now glorify Thou me, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was made"; so Christ prayed.

The glory which Christ had with His Father before the world was made was the glory of His divine personality. During Christ's mortal life on earth He was shorn of the glory which naturally became His human nature on account of His Personality. His earthly life earned for His human nature entrance into consummated glory, not for His soul only—for He possessed this already—but for His complete manhood, inclusive of His body. This glory befitted Him as God-man, and of this glory Peter, James and John had a momentary glimpse on the Mount of the Transfiguration.

For us Christ merited forgiveness of sin, redemption and everlasting happiness. But Christ merited for others in a different way from that in which He merited for Himself.

One merits for oneself directly by a kind of efficient

causality, rendering oneself worthy to receive the reward. Christ could not indeed render His divine Person more worthy of glory, but He could by His earthly life earn for His human nature an additional title to glory.

One merits for others by a kind of exchange in justice, giving to God a good deed that God may give some good to those on whose behalf the good deed was done. Thus Christ merited for us by offering the infinite merits of His earthly life that God might give us grace and final salvation. There ensued a true exchange in justice, God bestowing on us what Christ had truly earned. Possibly one may still ask: "But how could Christ merit at all, seeing that He could not sin? The Saints in heaven cannot merit, because they see the face of God, and can sin no more, how then could Christ merit?"

The answer is really simple. True, the Saints in heaven cannot sin, because they are no longer on earth and have reached their final end. Their soul sees God and their body has ceased to exist till the general Resurrection; that is the reason why they can merit no longer. Christ on earth was not like the Saints in heaven; He had still a mortal body, and in so far was in the state of a wayfarer towards His final end. He was an exile on earth as far as His complete human nature went, although His soul had the Beatific Vision. Thus He could gain by His earthly life the reward He wished to purchase by His infinite merits. The impossibility of sin does not destroy the possibility of merit, for it leaves the freedom of the will in all things except the avoidance of sin, and merit can be gained in a thousand ways beyond the avoidance of sin.

§3. *Christ's free will and the Father's command.*

There remains this obvious difficulty: if God had given to Christ the strict positive command to die on the Cross, then Christ, whose human soul always saw the face of the Father, was under an absolute necessity of obeying that command. Disobedience to a strict command was totally impossible to Christ, for Christ could not sin. But if Christ was under an absolute necessity in this matter, He had not free will in this respect, and consequently He was not really obedient, for no one is obedient in a matter which he is compelled to do by internal compulsion. Therefore Christ's death, not being free, was not meritorious, and we are not redeemed by the merits of the death of Christ.

All this sounds very formidable, but it is less formidable than it sounds. It is indeed a difficulty, but not an insuperable one. What is a strict command—a command, I mean, under pain of sin? A course of action which is so intrinsically connected with a man's obtaining his ultimate end that, unless it be followed, he cannot obtain that end. Sin is an aversion from one's ultimate end. In the case of venial sin, it is at least a deviating from the road towards the ultimate end, and therefore a retarding in the attainment of the ultimate end. If Christ's Passion was proposed to the human soul of Christ as a command under pain of sin, whether mortal or venial, Christ was intrinsically determined to the fulfilment of that command, and so His action was not free and meritorious. But the will of God is not always a command in this particular sense. There is a will of God which is called "will of complacency," an absolute will indeed that something should happen, but not a will that intrin-

sically connects its occurrence with the attainment of one's ultimate end.

A comparison may aid us in understanding this point, if we grasp the difference between commands and evangelical counsels. No one could reasonably doubt to-day that it was God's direct and absolute will that St. Theresa should be a Carmelite nun, or St. Gregory the Great a bishop, or St. Barnabas an apostle. Yet none of these persons had a command under sin to lead the lives they did. God absolutely willed that these persons should act as they acted, but He willed that they should choose this course of action of their own free will, without placing before them the choice between a nun's, or bishop's, or an apostle's life—and damnation; or even the choice between such a life and deviation from, and retardation of, their ultimate end. These things were never precepts or commands in this restricted sense: "Either do this or displease Me."

Even if St. Theresa, or St. Gregory, or St. Barnabas, had the clearest insight into the future, and could realize God's Will as we now realize it after centuries, looking back on the position of their lives in the story of God's Church, still the evangelical counsels never became precepts to them. Even if St. Theresa, St. Gregory, or St. Barnabas had chosen the married state, it would have been no sin whatever in them. Granting even a direct revelation such as came to St. Paul, that God had destined him to the work of the Apostolate, even so, this became no command under sin, but was still left to the untrammelled free choice of St. Paul, and his choice of the Apostolate was eminently meritorious, and not merely the necessary avoidance of

sin. In some such way, though Christ in his human soul fully knew God's absolute will of complacency in the scheme of Redemption, according to which He, Christ, should redeem the world by His death, Christ also knew that His human soul stood not before the alternative either to undergo the Passion or to lose the Beatific Vision.

In face of such a choice there would indeed not have been liberty. But the Heavenly Father willed the redemption to be by the completely free choice of Christ. Knowing this, Christ freely chose it. In consequence, Christ could be said truly to have " obeyed," and accepted a " command," as in ordinary parlance we speak of obeying a call to the religious life when we think it to be God's Will that such or such a person should be a nun or a priest. Christ of his own free will entered into the plans of God ; though realizing that there was no intrinsic connection between His fulfilment of them and the Beatific Vision, He fulfilled them not by intrinsic compulsion but of free choice. The highest and most noble obedience is to conform one's will to the superior, whether he strictly commands or whether he does not.

The explanation we have given is not the only possible one. Some grave theologians have thought that the Will of the Father was a command in the strictest sense, and that Christ was not free with regard to the mere fact of His death, but only with regard to the mode and circumstances of it. They ingeniously argue as follows : any one is accounted a true martyr who is slain out of hatred for the faith, though possibly he would not have escaped the violence of his foes, even if he had tried. He becomes a martyr

by his voluntary acceptance even of inevitable torments. If a martyr is offered his freedom on condition of his apostasy and he refuses, this may certainly enhance the merit, but if his liberty is not offered him, not even at the price of apostasy, and he willingly accepts inevitable death, he remains a martyr in the true sense of the word; for it is the internal act of the will which constitutes the character of the deed. Christ knew that the Father wished him to die for the redemption of mankind, but so also the martyr knows that one day he is sure to die according to natural law. His freedom lies in accepting death here and now in these torments. Now Christ had complete command over His own life: "No one taketh my life from me, but I give it for the life of men." When Christ gave Himself up to His foes it was a free-will offering of His life for the salvation of men, however strict the Father's command to give His human life for His fellowmen, at any time, or in any circumstances.

This theory is also very attractive, and there are several others. However, let these suffice as attempted solutions of a problem of which we could only know the certain explanation if God deigned to reveal it to us.

§4. *Christ's Omnipotence and the Prayer of Petition.*

The mystery is deepened and extended when we consider that Christ prayed: "Not my will but thine be done."

First we ask ourselves, "Could Christ really pray, as we do?" To which we must answer that He certainly could, for He was truly man. Prayer is worship, admiration, gratitude, petition. Christ in His human nature prayed to His own divine person

and the Father and the Holy Ghost. His human soul adoringly recognized that it was assumed by the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, and all the forces of that Soul were employed in praising and loving the Person who assumed it unto Himself ; in expressing gratitude for that divine assumption, and willingness to serve and obey God in all things ; in asking for the glorification of His human nature, and in obtaining the redemption of His brethren and sisters according to the flesh.

Perhaps some one may say : " As there is only one Person in Christ, how can one Person pray to himself ?"

The answer lies in the very mystery of the Incarnation. A person with one nature only can only do what is proper to that one nature. We therefore cannot ask from ourselves, for the being which we ask from would be the identical being which is asking. The asker and the asked would be utterly identical. Not so in Christ. He has two natures and does in each what is proper to that nature. Christ as man is not in every respect identical with Christ as God, for the natures are not identical, though the Person is. This is hard to understand, but how could we expect to fathom the union between an infinite person and a finite nature, considering that we ourselves are only finite ? We can but faithfully cling to the revelation that is given to us. We must hold fast that Christ is truly man. Now, a man who could not pray would not be a real man. Moreover, the Scriptures again and again tell us in so many words that Christ prayed : " He went out into the mountain to pray and He passed the whole night in the prayer of God " (Luke xi, 12) : I go thither and pray : And He prayed : Father if it

be possible let this Chalice pass from me, but not my will but thine be done. And being in an agony he prayed the longer." (Luke xxii, 43.)

There is perhaps another thought which may aid us in facing this problem. The Scriptures tell us that Christ prayed to *His Father*; there is no explicit text to say that Christ prayed to *the Son*, that is, to His own personality. It is quite obvious, indeed, that as far as adoration and thanksgiving went, Christ's human soul worshipped the divinity, united with it in one Personality. Worship is the willing acknowledgment of someone's excellence. Christ's human soul willingly acknowledged the infinite excellence of the divine Person that held it; it knew its own utter dependence as a created nature on the Person of God the Son. As the Scriptures, however, speak of Christ's petitions to the Father, but not the Son or the Holy Ghost, it avoids, what might appear, *Self-asking*, or a petition to one's self. Conceivably the possibility of petition in Christ arises from the fact that He is God the Son and therefore another Person than the Person to whom the petition is addressed. God the Son in His divine nature could not ask even the Father, for he that asks does not as yet possess that what he asks, but God the Son possesses all things, for He possesses the divine nature. God the Son, however, in His human nature did not possess all things, and therefore could ask Another, God the Father, whose Son He is.

Be this as it may, it is a matter for our humble and devout contemplation to consider the vast and mighty soul of God-incarnate, absorbed in adoration, gratitude, acknowledgment of dependence and intensest

supplication, prostrate before the Infinite Being of God. Christ in prayer gave God more glory than all created beings together ever had given, or could give, to their Creator. His prayer of petition obtained with irresistible efficacy whatever He asked. Christ was heard, so says St. Paul, because of the reverence due to Him.

§5. *The Agony in the Garden.*

Was Christ's prayer always heard? Christ Himself gave the answer: "Father, I know Thou hearest me always!" Even the prayer in Gethsemane is no exception. It would be a mistake to regard "this chalice" as the torments and death on the Cross, and to think that He prayed to escape crucifixion and was refused. The Chalice was the agony in the Garden. He asked it to pass away and it passed away. The Father sent an angel from heaven to comfort him.

If we combine the words of the Evangelists, we can form the following account. He fell upon the ground on his face, praying that if it might be, the hour might pass from him, saying: "Father, all things are possible to thee; if thou wilt, remove this chalice from me, nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." The second time he went and prayed, saying: "My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, thy Will be done." He prayed the third time, saying the self-same words. And there appeared to him an angel from heaven strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed the longer. And his sweat became drops of blood trickling down upon the ground.

In perhaps no passage of Scripture is Christ's human

soul more completely unveiled than in this. "My soul," said He, on entering Gethsemane, "my soul is sorrowful unto death." Christ was not given to exaggeration. His sorrow would have ended in death, even in the Garden, had He not decreed to die on Calvary. He was filled with fear and apprehension, repugnance, horror and aversion, sadness and depression. It seemed to overwhelm and overmaster Him. Why this sudden sorrow? It was, first of all, a free act of the divine Person restraining and inhibiting the flow of happiness which naturally flowed from His divine into His human nature through the Beatific Vision. Not indeed that this was a new act of God the Son, for it was contained in the very assumption itself of a human nature, still in exile on earth, liable to pain and sorrow, destined to die for the sins of His brethren. The Beatific Vision indeed remained in the heights of Christ's intelligence, but the lesser powers of His human nature, unaided by miraculous help, shrank in unspeakable terror from the immediate future.

This sorrow was, secondly, an act of His human free will. In the supreme activity of His intellectual will He had long consented to His Passion and Death. But a man is not like an angel merely contemplating truth in the calm of the intellect and embracing it with a purely spiritual will. Manhood can suffer; man's whole nature can strive in agony against an evil, although his rational will remains firm. When Christ said, "Not my will but thine," He meant by "my will" not a decision of his intellectual free will, but the natural human tendency to avoid or overcome evil; the spontaneous irrepressible shrinking of His whole humanity from suffering. Nor, surely, should

we think that this was merely shrinking from physical pain. Life is indeed sweet, and it is hard and bitter to die, to die in the fulness of manhood at the age of thirty-three; to die in torments on a Cross; to die after the scourging, the crowning with thorns, while the blows and the blood and the blinding spittle disfigured His face; after the stumbling, and falling under the load of the Cross, after the piercing of hands and feet with the nails. Christ's imagination, vivid and strong, must have made Him realise fully all the cruel bitter details.

But His sorrow in the Agony was a shrinking too from mental torture. Christ was to be put to death by His own people. He loved His people. He had cried over Jerusalem, that had not known the day of her visitation. He loved His people. He had sat in the cottages of the poor. He had eaten and drunk even with sinners. When He saw the crowd pale with hunger in the desert, He called His disciples together and said: "I have pity on the multitude; so easily led, so helpless against evil influences, so easily roused to anger or love." In the Garden a great pity wrung His soul; pity for the crowd that should cry out for His death, and pain that they should hate Him, who loved them so well. He looked beyond the crowd which surged round Him on Calvary to the multitude without number, throughout the centuries in all places, who should virtually clamour for His death by their sins. He saw the terrible army of Christ-haters marching through the ages to bring down from His height "the gaunt Galilean who has spoiled the sport of men." He saw, still further beyond, those, who, notwithstanding His agony and pain

should encompass their own eternal death, and hear the final: "Go away, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

When His eyes rested on His friends, His own followers, He saw Judas fumbling to find the halter for his suicide, He saw Peter in abject terror before a servant-maid, swearing that he did not know Him, and the Apostles hiding for fear of the Jews, and doubting even when the news of His rising came. He saw even the good with a myriad faults, unlovable, repulsive, selfish, quarrelsome, feeble and mean. And He saw His own Mother in tears standing beneath His Cross, sinless and yet suffering.

Christ saw the whole tragedy of sin from the first day of the Fall to the final day of doom, and His soul became sorrowful unto death, for it was the tragedy of His brethren and sisters according to the flesh, of those "neighbours" whom He, alone among all the children of men, loved as He loved himself.

CHAPTER IV

AFTER THE ASCENSION

§1. *The Meaning of Christ's Ascension into Heaven.*
§2. *The Reality of Christ's Ascension into Heaven.*
§3. *Our Union with Christ in Heaven through Grace.*
§4. *Can we sadden or gladden Christ in Heaven?*
§5. *Christ's Life in the Catholic Church.*

§1. *The Meaning of Christ's Ascension into Heaven.*

The Incarnation is not a fact of the past, that is over and gone. God did not only become man, but He is man now and will be man eternally. We say in the Creed: "He ascended into heaven, He sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead." In the fulness of His manhood, with body and soul, with flesh and blood, He has entered heaven and will remain there throughout all ages. This is not the place to discuss the question whether heaven is a locality or a state. It is in fact both.

Heaven considered as a condition of happiness is a state of soul and body. The state of the soul is the direct vision and enjoyment of God face to face; the state of the body is the possession of the preternatural gifts of immortality, agility, subtilty, clarity and impassibility. These properties are explained in the treatise on the Afterlife.

Heaven is also in some sense a locality. Christ ascended into heaven and a cloud took Him away from our sight. To the Apostles He seemed to rise above their heads and disappear into the sky. We all know that the earth is a globe, revolving on its own axis and making an ellipse round the sun, whereas the sun revolves round a centre lying within its own circumference, and also moves in space towards some spot in the firmament. These are facts which a schoolboy knows. When to-day an orator exclaims that Christ ascended into heaven, he may make a gesture towards the sky, but he and his listeners know that this is no precise indication as to the place where Christ then went or now is.

Modernists make a great ado about the words in the Creed referring to the Ascension, as if we must re-state some articles of the faith to bring it into harmony with modern science. They say that at least on this point the Christian faith has changed.

This is a childish error, unworthy of thinking men. The faith has remained what it always was. It accepted as true an historical fact that on a definite day, at a definite hour, and in a definite place, before the eyes of many men, Christ was lifted up into the sky till His body disappeared from sight. It never was an article of faith that Christ remained in the spot where the cloud took Him away from their eyes, or continued His journey upward in a straight line till He came to where He now is, or that by pointing up to the sky now we indicate the precise locality where He now resides. The ancients certainly thought that the earth was flat and that the whole firmament moved round the earth, but their scientific errors were no

articles of faith, and they never taught that they were. Whatever they held about earth and sky, it was perfectly immaterial to their Christian belief.

Heaven is, of course, a locality in some sense, wherever it is. Even glorified and heavenly bodies still remain material, and therefore retain some relation to the material universe. Christ's glorified body is in some special relation to other bodies, for it has extension, and thus its distance from or nearness to other material substances is in some way measurable and real.

When we say that since the Ascension Christ's body is in heaven we mean that it entered on that new relation in space to other material things which it did not possess during its mortal life. But what these relations are, where in astronomical and mathematical and scientific terms the Body is, we simply do not know. And no one ever claimed that he knew with the certainty of faith, notwithstanding all the quaint speculations of the Middle Ages about the empyrean heaven.

When we say that Christ now sitteth at the right hand of the Father, we do not mean, so says the children's Catechism, that God the Father has hands, for He is a spirit, but that Christ as God is equal to the Father, and as man is in the highest place in heaven, in other words is surrounded by such supreme honour and dignity as befits God made man. In what precise glory this dignity consists is beyond present human knowledge to conceive or imagine.

§2. *The Reality of Christ's Manhood in Heaven.*

There remains this great truth that God is still

man, that He still has human eyes, ears, lips and heart, that He still has a human soul, the same soul that once in the Garden of Gethsemane was sorrowful unto death. This truth is kept alive in the hearts of the faithful by their adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, their devotion to the Sacred Heart, the Sacred Face and so on, and also by their veneration of the Mother of God as being in the presence of her Son.

Outside Catholic Christianity this truth has been very much obscured. Even where the doctrine of the Incarnation would be expressed in a fairly orthodox way, the fact of the eternal reality of the Incarnation is rarely realized. The present writer often had occasion to ask non-Catholics whether they thought Christ was still man. He often received an emphatic No! or a statement that He was now a spirit or somehow absorbed in God. In an Anglican sermon delivered on Ascension Day he read to his sad amazement: "We commemorate that Christ this day was dissolved into the Parent-Spirit of the Universe!"

The true Catholic doctrine is, that, what God the Son assumed in the Incarnation He never laid aside. The Man of Galilee has never ceased to be what He was in His human nature, the Lover of the Children of Men. St. Paul says of Him that He is ever living to make intercession for us.

During two thousand years Christ, as man, has led an uninterrupted human life in heaven. He thinks and wills and energises in His human soul, the human soul of God. The peculiar relation into which God entered with His own creatures through the Incarnation has never ceased and will never cease. God is man now, and ever will be.

The first consequence is that the relations of human kinship which He assumed are everlasting. Mary is His mother now, and He is (not only was) Her Son. Joseph is His foster-father, the spouse and guardian of His Mother. The Baptist is His cousin, and possibly the playmate of His baby years. Mary and Martha and Lazarus are His friends still, for His human friendship is not fickle nor frivolous. John the Apostle is (not merely was) the disciple whom Jesus loves, and who, if there be a heavenly banquet in heaven, may rest his head on His bosom again. Christ no doubt has entered into personal human friendship with myriads of men and women since, but one friendship does not crowd other friendships out in that vast human soul of God.

If we keep steadfastly before our mind that God is man still, and thinks and wills and acts as man, as well as God, and that He will do so for ever, the Incarnation is realized not merely as a device to bring about the atonement and redemption, but as an eternal, cosmic, fact which has eternally changed the relation of the Universe to its Maker.

Only a small fraction of the human biography of God is told in the Four Gospels. There is a further story to tell, which we shall fully understand only when we also shall enter into the life beyond. Every human being is in a new relation to God through the Incarnation, for he shares the human nature of God Himself. We are brought closer to God by the very fact of our community of nature with Him. Human nature is infinitely distant from God in His divine nature. Between God and man is an impassable eternal gulf fixed. God in the greatness of His inner

being is immeasurably far away from the littleness of our humanity. We are but creatures called out of nothing. He is the Self-subsistent Creator. We are nonentities compared to Him. In the sense in which He is, we are not at all. Our name is " nothing."

Godhead and manhood are not different in degree, for no exaltation of humanity whatsoever, continued even for eternity, would ever reach God. God and man are different in kind, in being itself. The thought of community of nature between us and God, if based on the thought of our exaltation, involves both blasphemy and absurdity.

Yet God has achieved His purpose not by raising us up to Himself, but by stooping down to us. Even He could not make men gods, but He could make Himself man. He has bent down and embraced us and thus brought us close to Himself in ineffable intimacy. This assumption of manhood by the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity affects not merely the individual nature once assumed from the Virgin Mary, but the whole of the human race for ever.

Human kinship is the ground of an unchangeable relation between persons thus akin. The historical fact that my brother or sister is born from the same parents as myself and thus shares with me not only the same human nature in general but the particularized human nature derived from the same parents, makes me stand to him or her in a different relation for ever. In this sense God likewise, having become man, born of a human mother, a real daughter of the human race, has entered into a permanent relationship with each one of us.

God has not assumed nature in the abstract, nor has

He created a fresh human nature for Himself purely out of nothing, thus remaining without the racial bond which binds all men together. He has actually become our fellowman, with His pedigree within the human family. He has become not merely man, but Jesus of Nazareth, Mary's Son, and foster-son of Joseph the Carpenter. He did not descend from one of the stars, but was born on earth, and therefore each one of us is personally related to Him. It is true to say that He is flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, and that our blood flows in His veins. God and we have become relatives, and will be eternally such.

St. Luke brings out this truth most graphically in the third Chapter of his Gospel, when he writes: "Jesus himself was about thirty years, who was of Heli, who was of Melchi, who was of Matthat; and so on through seventy-two generations, ending: "who was of Enos, who was of Seth, who was of Adam, who was of God."

§ 3. *Our Union with Christ in Heaven through Grace.*

This physical relationship of all men to God in His human nature, which is the basis of our moral relationship to Him, is not the only effect of the Incarnation.

Our relationship goes even beyond this intimacy, by divine grace. We are supernaturally incorporated into Christ. This is not a mere metaphor. It is the expression of a fact, and a physical, though not material, reality. In the Incarnation God the Son embraced the individual Humanity of Jesus, and assumed it unto Himself by an eternal union, but this embrace meant more than the hypostatic union of one single human nature with God. It meant the embrace of all

men and women as His brothers and sisters by divine grace.

If we may compare humble things with high, we would say: "As a man who marries into a family normally regards with affection the brothers and sisters of his wife, and normally becomes related to them by more than physical bonds, so when God the Son wedded His spouse, in the human nature of Christ, His love overflowed on all those who were the brethren and sisters of Jesus, and who became of the same flesh with Him. He embraced them all with supernatural love." Now, God's love is not a sort of sentiment in God, in the imperfect way in which love exists in us. In God love is a reality.

This is not the place to elaborate the Catholic doctrine of grace, for which another treatise is required. We need but remind our readers that, according to Catholic faith, grace is a supernatural gift of God. This gift is a real quality inherent in the human soul, infused into the human soul by the creative omnipotence of God. It is in actual fact what St. Paul calls it—a new creation. This is not a poetic figure or exaggeration. It is sober truth; truth stated in bald terms, and to be taken literally. Grace is not merely the favour or benevolent regard of God. Grace is a reality *in us*, called into existence by His Almighty power. By this created quality within us we become sharers of the divine nature, in the measure in which a creature can participate in the very life of God. Grace does not make us gods, but, while leaving us creatures, produces in us a quality which is beyond the powers and claims of any created or creatable nature whatsoever. Through this quality we share, though in a

limited way, in the very life of God Himself, though our being remains eternally distinct from Him, and infinitely below Him, considered in itself.

Now, the gift of grace is the outcome and extension of the Incarnation of the Son of God. In the Hypostatic Union God assumed one individual human nature, through the Holy Ghost, from the Virgin Mary. By grace God elevates many men, not indeed to His own divine Personality, but to a similarity of life, by which they become the adopted sons of God. This adoption is not a mere forensic declaration of sonship. It is an incorporation into Christ. God willed that we should be brethren and sisters of Christ, endowed with grace ; that is, with a gift which is next to that of the Hypostatic Union itself. In Christ God embraced all mankind, offering them the opportunity of becoming sons of God. This truth is revealed to us in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel : " As many as received Him, he gave them power to be made sons of God, to them that believe in His name, who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and of truth."

Our Salvation, then, lies not merely in the historical fact of the past, be it the fact of Bethlehem or of Calvary. It lies in our present union with Christ as He now is, for we know that He is ever living and making intercession for us. This intercessory life of Christ in heaven is a great mystery.

If Christ is pleading for us to-day ; if He sees our sins, our ingratitude, our dangers, our possible loss, is not His life still one of unsatisfied desires, sorrows and agony of soul ?

§3. *Can we sadden or gladden Christ in Heaven ?*

Can we to-day by our good or evil deeds gladden or sadden the heart of Christ ? The Scriptures speak of sinners crucifying Christ afresh by their sins. Is this merely a mode of speech or can we still actually grieve His human soul and fill it with pain and sorrow ?

It is quite certain that Christ, having entered into His glory, can no longer be subject to sorrow. Nothing we can do can rob him of the full consummation of His joy, unchangeable and imperturbable for ever. On earth, He could be weary and sad. On earth His soul indeed enjoyed the Beatific Vision and could not lose the happiness essential to it, but as it was still joined to a mortal and passible body, and still a wayfarer on earth, It could be sorrowful even unto death. But after the Resurrection sorrow became an impossibility to the human nature of Christ, as it will be impossible even to us when we shall have entered into our reward. Christ as God possesses the infinite happiness of His divine nature. Christ as man, though His happiness is not infinite, possesses now a happiness great beyond human comprehension, and exceeding the happiness of all creatures, whether angelic or human. This happiness is shielded from aggression on the part of evil men, whatsoever they may do.

Whenever the Scriptures seem to speak of injuring, offending, or hurting Christ, we must not forget that they also speak of grieving the Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost, having only His divine nature, is not subject to sorrow. Such expressions mean that the sinner places himself in a relation to God the only parallel to which upon earth would be the relation of a man to a friend whom he hurt, grieved, or offended. It is not

God who changes, but the sinner who changes himself in his relation to God and to Christ, without depriving God or Christ thereby of happiness. If a comparison may be allowed, we may say that a man who walks out of the warm beneficent sunshine into the chilly and dark shade does not alter the sun but himself, though he may be said, in some sense, to deprive the sun of himself as an object to shine upon.

Although then we cannot sadden Christ in the full sense of the word, we must not infer that we cannot please Him, or gladden His human soul. The joys of Christ's human nature, however ineffable, however vast, are not infinite, for His human nature is not infinite. They can therefore be increased. They are not as the happiness of the Godhead, which is essentially and necessarily unchangeable, because its fullness is co-extensive with that of the divine nature.

Christ embraces indeed the Highest Good in seeing God, and He thus possesses the full and joyful consummation of His human nature. But His human will can still turn to particular and individual good and enjoy it in God and through God. Christ truly rejoices in His Saints and rejoices in the grace of those whom He has redeemed. When we say that Christ's heart still throbs with love and pity for us, this is not a mere metaphor.

On the other hand we must guard ourselves against a misunderstanding. On earth no one can feel pity without feeling pain, for us in fact in our imperfect state on earth pity is a kind of pain at seeing the sufferings of our neighbour. So it was also with Christ in the days of His sojourn on earth. It is so no longer. The pain of the pity has gone. Still, the

love in it has remained, and is in heaven no less than it was in Bethlehem, Nazareth and Calvary. This love is not mere feeling or passive emotion in the human soul of Christ. It is active will for our good and energizing activity for our salvation. Few realize the unceasing activity of Our Lord on our behalf, as the centuries pass from His ascension to His return on the clouds of heaven. In non-Catholic circles the completeness of His Sacrifice upon the Cross, when "once for all" He made atonement for sin, is often erroneously used to exclude Christ's continued activity ever since.

It is forgotten that, if to-day He is able to save to the uttermost those that believe in Him, it is by the active application to each human soul of the merits of His passion, His unceasing pleading before the throne of His Father. To-day He hears our prayers and grants them, to-day He sees our needs and has mercy, to-day He acts as high priest of all mankind, and His priesthood is no idle function. Until the final consummation, when all the Redeemed shall be gathered to God, the task of Christ is being fulfilled. This task is not fully consummated till, as Firstborn of many brethren, He delivers back the kingdom to God the Father ; the Messianic kingdom has not fully triumphed till the last of the Saved is gathered in. Then and then alone will that Sacred Humanity of Christ have fulfilled its task, and Christ in His Human nature, joined by a multitude which no one can number, will be fully satisfied, and will plead no longer, but will sing the praises of His Father, with all His brethren, throughout endless ages.

§4. *Christ's Life in the Catholic Church.*

Meanwhile, Christ lives in His Church. Uninstructed folk may think this a pious and poetical fancy. It is not so. It is a fact. It is Christ who acts in the Church. It is Christ who baptizes, confirms, absolves, anoints, ordains, joins in wedlock. It is Christ Himself who enters the hearts of His faithful in the Blessed Eucharist, Christ who is the Victim, offering Himself perpetually to God the Father in the Mass. Christ is the Great High Priest. The Christian priesthood perpetuates the priesthood of Christ. Christian priests are instruments in His hands, not dead and mechanical instruments, not mere tools indeed, but nonetheless instruments, unable to act independently of Him. Their ministerial actions derive all their efficacy from Him. Such actions would be worthless and idle without Him. They derive their value not merely from a past action of Christ that is over and gone.

They are not merely a legal appeal to an historic fact that lies behind us by almost twenty centuries. They are the acts of Christ here and now. The infusion and increase of grace in the recipients of the Sacraments is immediately connected with Christ, who is the only source of all grace. No grace is given except because of Christ and by Christ. Christ is the mediator between God and man, and no grace is bestowed except by His mediatorship. His mediatorship is not merely a sort of legal status. It is an activity, it is a life. Our supernatural life is mediated through Him everywhere and at all times. His Humanity is the only channel of grace from God to us. No other name under heaven is given to us by which we can be saved. He is able to save to the uttermost those that come to the Father

through Him. He does so now. He is the Saviour, because He saves men now, by imparting sanctifying grace now to everyone to whom it is given. Not only does He impart grace, but He maintains it. Without His unceasing maintenance of that grace it would die. He is the life-giver of all those who are united to Him.

Let us not misunderstand. The Catholic Church does not teach that Christ's human nature is everywhere present. She teaches her children in the Catechism to ask the question : " Where is Jesus Christ ?" She teaches them also the answer : " Jesus Christ is everywhere as God, and, as God made man, He is Heaven and in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar." To the Saints in Heaven and to the adorers and recipients of the Blessed Sacrament, Christ's human nature is physically present, because His Sacred manhood is brought in some physical relation to their own manhood. In Heaven, though the Blessed have no bodies till the last day, and therefore no sense-life as we have it on earth, Christ's humanity is physically present to them, because they are directly aware of His humanity, in whatever way this awareness is brought about in their soul.

In the Blessed Sacrament Christ is physically present, because the Substance of His Body and Blood is veiled under the appearances of Bread and Wine, and these appearances are capable of physical contact with human senses.

In this precise way Christ is not everywhere present, but this does not mean that Christ cannot act wheresoever He chooses. Though His Sacred Body is not everywhere physically present, this does not mean that all things are not present unto Him, or that He is

unaware of them in His glorified human soul. He knows each one of us not merely in the infinite intelligence of His Godhead, but He knows each one of us in the finite intelligence of His manhood. In other words, He knows us as man; we are directly present unto Him as man, and all that happens in our supernatural life, every grace received, every grace increased, every merit acquired, is His doing, as God-made-man.

We read in the Scriptures that we shall be judged by Christ as man. The Son of Man shall come on the clouds of Heaven, in great power and majesty, to judge the living and the dead. But He will be our judge as God-made-man because He has been our Saviour as God-made-man. The Father has given the judgment to the Son, not as a kind of honorary function or as a reward for His death on Calvary, but as the natural outcome of Christ's activity in saving the children of men. The judgment is, in fact, the culminating act of the agelong life of Christ as man, and the crowning of His redemptive activity.

From Mount Olivet Christ ascended into heaven, and a cloud took Him away from our sight, but this does not mean that we passed away from His sight in the sense that we passed away from the sphere of His direct human knowledge. True, He may not see us by a physical reflection of our image on the retina of His human eye. Possibly not, but there are higher ways of knowledge, wider avenues to reality than the sense perception of mortal eyes. Those avenues were never closed to the human knowledge of Christ. The glorified life then of Christ is all-embracing and all-pervading, as far as the story of the human race goes. Those that turn to Christ and accept Him are bound to

Him by the physical, though immaterial, link of sanctify ng grace, knit to Him closer than a brother to a brother. Those that reject Him He still pursues by solicitations of His grace, as long as their earthly life lasts. Those that are after death in the land of twilight, where, by waiting and sorrowing, souls are purified, are still being purified by Him. Perhaps even those who have passed away into outer darkness, whence they shall never return, may still have less punishment than they deserve because of Him.

For—let the blessed words be repeated—God has become one of us. In the story of the Fall we read: "Behold Adam has become as one of us . . . . . now therefore lest perhaps he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever and ever . . . . . the Lord God sent him out of the paradise of pleasure."

The Fall has been completely reversed.

The attempt of man to be like unto God, to be one with Father, Son and Holy Ghost, failed, and brought the angel with the flaming sword to drive him away from the tree of life. God's plan has succeeded. The seemingly impossible has happened. God has become one of us. He is our fellowman, and so He will remain as long as God is God. In Christ, Humanity sits enthroned on the throne of the Most High, that we His fellowmen may eat of the tree of life and live for ever and ever.

PART IV

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE INCARNATION

Chapter I
CHRIST'S BLOOD-RELATIONSHIP TO MEN

Chapter II
THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Chapter III
THE VIRGIN MOTHER

CHAPTER I

CHRIST'S BLOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH MEN

§1. *Christ's kinship with us in blood.*
§2. *Christ's relationship to us by grace.*
§3. *Christ's Human Appearance.*

§1. *Christ's kinship with us in blood.*

God having decreed to assume a human nature might have carried out His divine will in a different way from that which He actually chose. He might have created a human body out of nothing, and, having called it into being by an act of creative omnipotence, He might have infused into it a human soul. He might have chosen as place for this Incarnation any place within or without this wide Universe. He might have instantaneously assumed the full estate of adult manhood, and having placed this perfect manhood somewhere in the starry skies, He might have descended from on high and come down on the clouds of heaven in great power and majesty, and thus have entered this world of ours. This He might have done, or have chosen any other way of becoming incarnate which pleased His untrammelled free-will, and God would still have become truly man, like unto us in all things except sin. Had He done so, He would have become like unto us, but not one of us.

He chose another way.

He entered the human family, He did not disdain a virgin's womb. He was conceived and born, and went through the helplessness and humiliation of infancy and childhood. His human body was not one newly created it was borrowed and derived from a human mother. A human mother owned and possessed Him as her own baby, whose very substance was hers. He was suckled at her breast, and when He learnt to speak, as children learn, He learnt to call her by that word which expresses the tenderest intimacy, uttermost dependence, and most loving gratitude known on earth. He rightly called her "mother," and she called Him "son." Thus God became the son of a woman, and through her akin to the human race. God became not man in the abstract, but He became Jesus of Nazareth. He became a Jew, of the tribe of Judah, and the family of David. The line of his ancestors was foretold. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and David were singled out. His pedigree stands at the head of the Gospel. His relatives are mentioned by the Evangelists. "The Lord's people" were known and pointed out as being related to Him. The Emperor Hadrian in the second century examined some of "the Lord's people" and contemptuously dismissed them as poor folk, of no importance. They might be related to the crucified "king of the Jews," but they said they claimed no earthly kingdom, and were no danger to the Empire of the Romans.

God therefore did not merely become man, but one of our fellowmen. We are His brothers and sisters in physical reality. Not one reader of this book but could, if he had sufficient historical information, trace his own relationship to God-made-man. However

distant our kinship in blood might be, yet it is real, for both God and we are children of Adam and Eve. In foolish vanity men will sometimes boast of some great personage in their family. All men with becoming pride can boast that they have God for a relative. Thus we are all related to divine Royalty.

§2. *Christ's relationship to us by grace.*

St. Paul reminded the Athenians on the Areopagus of what concerning God a poet of theirs had once said: "We also belong to His kin." Such kinship as even the pagans knew was based on the similarity of our spiritual nature to God as a spirit and on the fact of our being creatures of His power. The kinship which Christians know is greater still. Referring to Him who as man sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, we can with greater justice proclaim before all creation: "We also belong to his kin."

Early Fathers saw in Luke's genealogy of Christ an indication that he summed up in Himself all generations back to Adam and thus began the human race anew. God's beloved Son in whom He was well pleased was this Jesus who then was about thirty years old and the Son (as it was supposed) of "Joseph, of Heli, of Matthat, of Levi," and thus through seventy-two names, till he ends: "of Enos, of Seth, of Adam, of God." Christ stood there on the shore of the Jordan, in the fulness of His manhood, thirty years old, as sinless Adam stood in Paradise on the day God made him. Apparently He was but one link more in a long chain of generations, but in fact He was the Beginner of the new Race, the First Born from the dead, as St. Paul expressed it. Christ sums up within Himself all those who had

gone before; their blood flowed in His veins and He was their Son according to the flesh. As Adam's child Christ acknowledges and by His acknowledgment redeemed His earthly forefathers back even to Adam, who then again became God's.

But Christ redeemed not only those gone before, not only those who lived in His own day, but also all of us who came later or are to come throughout the ages till the end of time, for we are in very fact His brothers and sisters according to the flesh. He made satisfaction for all the members of His own race, and in Him God was propitiated. In Him the human race atoned for its sin, by one of its members, the Second Adam, who did not sin as the First Adam, but whose sinless manhood was united to God in personal union.

The very scheme of divine redemption rests on the fact of Christ's blood relationship with ourselves. If it pleased God to create some new human being and call it out of nothing, without any of the consequences of the Fall, such a man would indeed be without original sin, but he would also be without the Saviour, for he would not be of the kith and kin of Jesus Christ. Our blood relationship with Christ is the source of our glory and the beginning of our hope.

§3. *Christ's Human Appearance.*

God became a perfect man, but the perfection of His manhood did not lessen the truth that He became *this* man with individual and concrete particularities. Therefore no doubt He bore the features of His Mother. The villagers of Nazareth recognized Him among all others who lived in the hamlet. His fellow children

during His boyhood, when at play together, distinguished well between Him and their other mates. The Magdalen on Easter morn knew Him instantaneously by the sound of His voice when He said: "Mary!" As for thirty years He led a hidden life in Galilee, the people of His own district were so familiar with Him that they marvelled at Him as miracle-worker and prophet, for they said they knew Him and His so well! Though under the spell of His divinity, we will not forget the reality of His individual manhood.

St. Luke tells us that as a boy He grew in age and grace before God and men. But all that grows, grows in one definite way. A rose does not grow into a lily, nor a lily into a rose. So Jesus grew in grace, but He did so in one definite way. The experience of a country carpenter's son is not that of a scholar in the homes of learning, and God allowed His human experience to form His human soul and body till He became Jesus, the Carpenter's Son, whom the Galileans knew.

Sometimes one hears people express their regret that no sculptor or painter, no modern device of cunning art, has perpetuated the real portrait of God-Incarnate. No doubt divine Providence has wisely ruled it so. Charming and touching legends, redolent of earliest times, have come down to us of Our Blessed Lord Himself miraculously giving us His likeness.

King Abgar of Edessa sends for Our Lord to come and heal him. Our Lord sends His image instead, which heals the king who gazes on it. Berenice, the Chananean woman, whose faith is praised in the Gospel, is said to have erected a bronze statue in Cæsarea to her divine Master. And most likely of all, a woman meets Our Lord on the road to Calvary, hands him a cloth to

wipe His face, and He leaves the image of His sacred countenance on the cloth.

Whatever be thought of these touching stories, the fact remains that we do not now possess a real portrait, an historic likeness of God-Incarnate. The cloth of Veronica now barely gives us a recognisable outline of a human face. The loving imagination of man has indeed also sometimes drawn a pen picture, a sketch in words, of Our Blessed Lord's human appearance. They are just the outcome of affectionate dreams and tender fancy, but no more. There is perhaps one exception. Robert Eisler has drawn the world's attention to the fact that some mediæval descriptions of Christ may go back to Josephus' first edition of *The Jewish War*. As Josephus was born only seven years after Our Lord rose from the dead, the description of this Jewish priest may well rest on authentic information. Owing to the difficulty of the translation of the ancient terms and also to the difficulty of gathering these fragments together, we give this description with every reserve.

" His being and figure were quite human, a man of middle size, with figure somewhat bent forward, with a long face and prominent nose, with brows knitted together, so as to inspire both love and awe in the beholders, with no abundance of hair, but parting it in the middle of his head according to the habit of the Nazarenes. His looks were quite simple, only his bearing was more than human, because He performed wonders through some invisible power."

The imagination of our faith is perhaps a better lens, casting a truer image than any physical crystal could, and the dignity of God-Incarnate is too great to be

represented through the poor endeavours of a human artist. Had God wished to leave it to us, we would possess it. He thought better that we should be without it. So be it.

CHAPTER II

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

§1. *God's purpose in the Virgin Birth.*
§2. *The meaning of "conceived of the Holy Ghost."*
§3. *The Virgin Birth in the Scriptures.*

§1. *God's purpose in the Virgin Birth.*

THERE seems to be no intrinsic and necessary connection between the virgin birth of Christ and the mystery of the Incarnation. God might have assumed, so many think, a human nature, and that human nature might have had a normal human origin from a human father as well as from a human mother. The Incarnation stands by itself, perfect and complete, whether Christ's mother be a virgin or not.

So likewise the mystery of the Atonement requires, as such, no virgin birth of the Redeemer. To break the entail of original sin does not demand that Christ should have no human father. Christ's human nature would have been sinless, even if He were not virgin-born, for His human nature was without human personality, but all sin inheres in a person. Christ's person is God the Son, and God and sin are infinitely apart. When God decreed that the human nature He intended to assume should be born of a virgin-mother, He did so, if we may reverently guess His purpose, to add lustre to His entrance into this world, by not admitting those

less noble circumstances which accompany ordinary births. He did so to give a unique dignity to His Blessed Mother, to give her a supreme token of the truth of Gabriel's message, to teach men His love for purity and instil into their hearts a desire that higher thoughts should ever rule their lower passions. He did so to show even in His conception that He was the New Adam, the First Man since the Fall not to receive the baneful inheritance which comes by natural generation. He did so to avoid what would have appeared unseemly and incongruous in our eyes, viz., that He should have had two fathers—a human and a divine one. Christian piety surely, even apart from its love for the Virgin Mother, would shrink from the thought that the Eternal Father and a mere human being should both stand to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity in the relation of fatherhood.

God decreed a Virgin-Mother because it was becoming that the event of the Incarnation should be marked by a unique miracle of God's power and condescension. It was becoming that God Himself, without the use of secondary causes, should frame and fashion the human body of His only begotten Son.

On the other hand, we repudiate as folly the frivolous statement, sometimes made in the public press, that, historically speaking, the dogma of the Virgin Birth owes its origin to the idea that Christ had God as Father, as if the doctrine of the Virgin Birth was an afterthought of early Christianity, which gradually raised Christ to the dignity of Son of God, and in consequence was forced to exclude human fatherhood.

The eternal generation of God the Son from God the Father in the Blessed Trinity is one thing, the genera-

tion in time of Christ from Mary, His mother, is another thing. The Church has never confused these things. The manhood of Christ, considered in itself, apart from His divine Person, can not be said to have God as father. God never became a human father, and Christ as man had no father at all.

§2. *The meaning of "conceived of the Holy Ghost."*

In the Creed we say: "conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." The blasphemous jibe of a Huxley concerning this article of the faith, and many similar jests, which rationalists repeat, only prove their total ignorance of Christian belief. The forming of Christ's infant body in the womb of Mary was the work equally of all the three divine Persons—Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Only actions immanent in the Deity are proper respectively to each Person. Other divine actions are "transient," i.e. producing an effect outside God, and as it were passing out of Him. These actions are creative acts, and all creative acts are common to the Blessed Trinity. When, therefore, we say: "conceived of the Holy Ghost," we do not mean such an absurdity as that the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity acted as human father of Christ. A human father gives of his own substance to produce a son in the likeness of his own nature; the Holy Ghost could give no substance of His own to the formation of a human being. God is a spirit, and immaterial, and has no parts.

The mystery of the Virgin Birth consists in this, that the matter out of which Christ's sacred body was formed was from Our Blessed Lady alone. *Factum ex muliere,* "made from a woman," says the Holy

Scripture. The omnipotence of God by immediate causality, and without any intermediary, created within her that energy, force or vital principle which made her a mother, though it left her a virgin. This divine causality was not, strictly speaking, creation, for creation produces a substance, a thing, but in this case God produced only a force or a principle of activity. He gave determinate specific life to the matter which the virginal body of Mary supplied, and into that matter He infused the human soul of Christ, which God had created and assumed in Hypostatic Union.

Mary was mother of her Child in a fuller and more complete sense than ordinary mothers, for they share their parentage with the fathers of their children. Mary had the fulness of parenthood in herself, for the whole substance of her Child's body was hers, and Jesus owed naught of the substance of His body to any one but His mother, who by a miracle of God's power had conceived Him and given Him birth. This truth is clearly indicated in the very words used by Gabriel in the Annunication: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee."

Why should this act of God be specially appropriated, or attributed, to the Holy Ghost, just as we appropriate creation to God the Father, and wisdom in creating to God the Son?

Because the action seems to us a manifestation of the inner nature of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. He is the Spirit of Holiness, the author of all sanctification. Now the power with which He endowed our Blessed Lady has some analogy to the action of grace upon the soul. The fruit of her womb was the Holy

One of God, and she was enabled to conceive, bear and bring Him forth through the power of an active principle which God infused into her body, beyond her natural powers.

The Catholic Church teaches us not merely that Christ was *conceived* by a virgin, but that He was *born* of the Virgin Mary. This implies that by a singular miracle of God's power Our Lady's integrity was maintained even in the birth of her Son. Christ, who on Easter morn passed out of the rock-tomb, while it remained closed ; Christ, who walked upon the waters and maintained His body on the surface of the waves ; Christ, who visited His Apostles, while they kept the doors closed for fear of the Jews, deigned to leave the womb of His mother, and to enter the world, in a miraculous way, without depriving His mother of her title of Ever-Virgin. The punishment of Eve, the pains of childbirth, were not for her. She alone was blessed amongst women, so as to wear the double crown, which no daughter of Eve has ever worn before or since, the crown of maidenhood and motherhood.

Nor was her honour for herself alone. Her honour proved a blessing to men and women throughout the world. God's action towards her was a revelation to mankind of God's love for purity. Her dignity has exalted all women and has inspired men with reverence towards them. It has strengthened men in their struggle to curb their wayward passions. It has given them a new ideal which they can carry out by the grace of Christ, the Virgin's Son, the ideal of building up a home not unworthy of the sacred names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, a home where chastity and self-restraint may reign in honour of God, who deigned

to be born of a virgin, and who deigned to place Himself under the paternal care of Joseph, "a just man," chosen to be the husband of the Virgin Mary and the foster father of God.

§3. *The Virgin Birth in the Scriptures.*

One finds it sometimes asserted that Christianity in adopting the dogma of Christ's Virgin Birth, has borrowed from non-Christian religions, in which the idea of the virgin birth of some god or hero is quite common. Of this we shall speak later. The statement sometimes made that the Virgin Birth rests on a less secure historical foundation than the other miracles of Our Lord is devoid of reasonable grounds. Obviously, the fact of the Virgin Birth can originally have been attested only by Mary and Joseph, or by Jesus revealing the fact to his Apostles. Moreover, during the lifetime of Mary this sacred and tender mystery would obviously not be the first truth publicly proclaimed before Jew and Gentile to provoke their ribald mockery.

In these circumstances, it is remarkable that the Virgin Birth is asserted and emphasized in St. Matthew and St. Luke, and suggested by the language of St. Mark, St. John and St. Paul. The absence of the story of Christ's infancy in St. Mark is fully accounted for by the fact that this Gospel gives the official testimony of St. Peter from the Baptism by St. John to the Ascension of the Lord. Of what preceded Christ's Baptism in the Jordan the Apostles were not God's predestined eye-witnesses. St. Mark, however, never calls Jesus the Son of Joseph, and even avoids the expression, given by other Evangelists, on the lips of the populace, who thought Him Joseph's son.

St. John omits practically all that was known from the three preceding Evangelists and likewise begins the story of Our Lord's life with the testimony of the Baptist. Even so, it is not unlikely that the first chapter of his Gospel contains an allusion to the Virgin Birth, where he refers to those " who are born not of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," for the singular instead of the plural of this sentence is maintained in a reading which can be traced to a date almost within a generation of St. John's death.

St. Paul, when he refers to Our Lord as " made of a woman " ; " become of a woman," shows by this strange and unusual phrase an effort to avoid the natural and normal designation of human origin from father and mother. Although St. Paul often emphasized that Christ was of the seed of David according to the flesh, he employed the uncommon expression : " become of a woman " to refer to Christ's human origin. Only belief in the Virgin Birth can adequately account for this.

A particular heresy denying the Virgin Birth the Church has never known, though in early days there were the Ebionites, who denied Christ's divinity, and only acknowledged Him as the merely human Messiah of the Jewish people. These folk thought Christ the normal son of Joseph the carpenter, but then they were not Christians in any true sense.

The article : " born of the Virgin Mary," was part of the Christian creed as far as history can trace it. A Christianity without the Virgin Birth is not known to history till very recent days. An Incarnation of God without the Virgin Birth, though perhaps in the abstract it might have been possible, has never been

held throughout the centuries. If in recent years some Christians have asserted that they believed in the Incarnation but not in the Virgin Birth, their asserted belief in the Incarnation would not bear a moment's investigation, for, while they use the word, they do not really believe that God became man, as Christians have always believed. Their belief in the Incarnation is a mere simulacrum, or, let us be plain, it is only a make-believe, it is a sham.

The denial of the Virgin Birth is like the denial of the Resurrection ; it undermines the essential authority of historic Christendom, the authority of the Church which Christ founded ; it destroys the basis and foundation of the belief in any Christian doctrine. If the Virgin Birth is not true, Christianity is worthless as a creed and a religion. The honeyed phrases in which some so-called " believers " excuse early Christians for their childlike simplicity and imaginative mentality in taking literally what " we now take as a symbol of a higher spiritual truth," ought to revolt any honest and intelligent man.

CHAPTER III

THE VIRGIN MOTHER

§1. *Her Immaculate Conception.*
§2. *Her freedom from actual sin.*
§3. *Her Perpetual Virginity.*
§4. *Her Assumption into Heaven.*

No treatise on the Incarnation is complete without some reference to the privileges of the Mother of God. The Scriptures say that He that is mighty has done great things to her, and that all generations shall call her blessed. The Archangel Gabriel called her full of grace, and this salutation is befitting to her who was exalted to so great a dignity. It would seem strange and almost incredible that God, having made her blessed amongst women, should not also have adorned her with spiritual graces in accordance with her sublime dignity.

§1. *Her Immaculate Conception.*

Mary's supreme privilege, apart from her motherhood of God, is her Immaculate Conception. By this privilege, as all educated readers know, she received no favour with regard to her bodily origin, as she was conceived and born in the normal way of all children of men as far as the body is concerned. Her Son's Virgin Birth stands unique, and is not shared by any

one, not even by His mother. Joachim and Anne were her parents in exactly the same way as all other parents are parents.

The Immaculate Conception of Mary relates exclusively to her soul. Whereas all other human souls, after the Fall, are brought into being while deprived of Sanctifying Grace, and stained by original sin, *her* soul, by a singular privilege, for the sake of the foreseen merits of her divine Son, was created in grace and without the stain of the sin of Adam. Mary was redeemed and saved, like all of us, by the mercy of God and the merits of Christ, but she was redeemed and saved in a more excellent way. We are redeemed and saved through the infusion of divine grace in baptism after birth. The favour God bestowed upon her was greater. It was greater even than the privilege of some prophets and of St. John the Baptist, who were sanctified in the womb of their mother. Mary was sanctified and her soul enriched with grace the very instant it began to be, the very instant that it left the creative hands of God, and was infused into the matter prepared for it by the laws of nature. Whereas we are snatched away out of the clutches of evil after it has already laid hold on us through our tainted nature, which we derive from Adam, Mary's soul was snatched away before any evil could touch her. She was conceived immaculate. Well did she sing in her Magnificat, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit exults in God my Saviour!" God indeed was her Saviour from stain and sin, in a unique and supereminent way, for the sake of the infinite merits of the Son to be born of her womb.

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is unin-

telligible without the doctrine of original sin. We have no opportunity here for proving the truth of original sin. We must take it for granted. For those who reject it, the Immaculate Conception is meaningless. For those who accept it, Mary's sinless conception would be a not unnatural accompaniment of her great dignity as Mother of God. To the normal Christian soul there is something incongruous in the thought of so exalted a person as God's Mother being under the influence of sin. The fact, however, of her Immaculate Conception is of its own nature a secret known only to God, and to those to whom He deigns to reveal it. We can know it therefore only by revelation, that is through the teaching of the Catholic Church.

The teaching of the Catholic Church was defined in 1854. Now, doctrines are defined because they have always been believed. They do not begin to be believed because they are defined. As the divinity of God the Son was first defined in A.D. 325, yet no one is so foolish as to say that it began to be believed in that year, so no one should be so foolish as to think that the Immaculate Conception began to be believed in 1854. This belief is as old as Christianity, for it is part of the unchangeable faith once delivered to the saints. It is suggested in the Scriptures. It is suggested by the wording of the first promise of redemption after the fall in Paradise. God spoke to the Serpent: "I shall put enmity between thee and the woman, between her seed and thy seed and It shall crush thy head." If Christ, who destroyed the power of Satan, is the seed of the woman that crushed the Serpent's head, it is natural to see in the woman the Mother of Jesus. The

text suggests that the enmity of her and her Son to Satan is an absolute one, and it would be but a very imperfect fulfilment of the prophecy if the woman who bore Jesus was herself for a time the bondslave of the Evil One, and only rescued in later years. The curse on Satan suggests a total reversal of Satan's first triumph. As Satan overcame first a woman and then a man, so in the dim future a woman and a man should triumph over him. A new Eve and a new Adam should arise, and it is natural to conclude that the second Eve should be created sinless as the first.

In like manner the salutation of Gabriel at the Annunciation, and the praise of St. Elisabeth suggest for Mary a privilege, unique in its grandeur, by which she is placed at least on an equality with the first Eve, who was created in grace. Already some seventeen hundred years ago, Origen commented on these words, saying: "As the Angel saluted Mary in singular terms, which I have not been able to find anywhere else in the Scriptures, I must specially dwell upon them. Indeed I do not recall to have read the expression: 'Hail, thou full of grace,' in any other place of the Holy Books; moreover, it is not to a man that these words are addressed: 'Hail, thou full of grace,' but it is a salutation exclusively reserved to Mary." The word of Gabriel, which we translate "full of grace," is in the original Greek of St. Luke stronger still, as it is the past participle of the verb "to grace," referring clearly to some time in the past when God gave her grace. If an ambassador from God's court gives to Mary the official style and title of one to whom God gave grace, it is indeed hard to believe that at one time she was a child of wrath, and

in the power of the devil. Mary was evidently divinely "graced" in some unique way in which other human beings are not, for we cannot suppose that Gabriel came from God's throne to speak idle compliments.

The antithesis between the first Eve and Mary the second Eve is as old as Christianity. We find it in St. Justin, who was born C. A.D. 100, in St. Irenæus and in Tertullian, who were born one generation later. "Death came by Eve, life by Mary" seems to have been a standing expression of the early Church. Even from a mere historical standpoint it seems reasonable to derive the designation of Mary as the Second Eve from Apostolic times. The thought is demonstrably so ancient and so universal that it is best accounted for by Apostolic origin. In Mary's dignity as Second Eve the Immaculate Conception is implicitly contained. It is quite true that the Fathers do not employ the technical expressions of the later scholastics, but then even the doctrine of original sin itself was not yet elaborated in technical language. It only reached precision of terminology through the Pelagian heresy of the fifth century. However, St. Ambrose of Milan C. A.D. 380, could describe fallen humanity praying thus for the coming of Christ: "Come and seek the sheep that is lost! Send not Thy servants nor hirelings, but come Thou Thyself! Take me not from Sara" (Abraham's wife, and mother of the Old Covenant), "but from Mary, that she may be an immaculate Virgin, a Virgin exempt, through grace, from every stain of sin."

The heretic Pelagius denied the necessity of divine grace for a holy life, and drew up a list of people "who had not only not sinned, but lived righteously."

His list ended with "the Mother of Our Lord and Saviour, whom piety obliges us to acknowledge without sin." St. Augustine answers him by formal denial in regard to all the persons referred to, "except the Virgin Mary, of whom I wish there should absolutely be no question when there is a question of sin." And when in extreme old age St. Augustine was accused by his bitterest foe, Julian of Ecclanum, that through his sweeping assertion of the universality of original sin he surrendered even Mary to the devil, the aged warrior of God indignantly repudiated the suggestion.

Mary is the Second Eve; of Mary there should be absolutely no question in a matter of sin; this well sums up the thought of the Church from the beginning. The feast day in December to commemorate the Conception of Mary was kept amongst Christians in the East probably soon after A.D. 500, and our Anglo-Saxon forefathers kept it long before the Normans came. They had probably received it from Theodore of Tarsus, who died as archbishop of Canterbury in A.D. 690.

Pius IX therefore, in 1854, defined a truth, the thought of which had brightened the gloom of December days for thirteen hundred years.

The mediæval controversy between Scotists and Thomists concerning the Immaculate Conception can only be understood if we bear in mind that they were under the spell of a faulty physiology, imagining the embryo to be animated successively by three life-principles, the vegetative, the sensitive and the rational one, the human soul thus supervening a merely animal one. The Thomists urged that a soul must first *be* before it can be *saved*, moreover that salvation can only

be from some existing danger. This danger in the case of Mary's soul can only have come from the fact of human conception as the vehicle of transmission of original sin. It is quite true that being must precede salvation in the mental or conceptual order, but it need not precede it in sequence of time or the chronological order. It is quite true that the danger of original sin threatened the soul of Mary from the fact of human generation. Indeed, had she not been the real daughter of human parents, she could not have been *saved* from original sin. But the act of the parents is not identical with the creative act of God by which the human soul is first constituted in being. The abstruse controversy found its solution when both parties finally realized that salvation came in Mary's case neither after nor before animation, but in animation itself, considered, not as the act of her parents, but as the beginning of the existence of Mary's soul.

2. *Her freedom from actual sin.*

In addition to the privilege of being conceived without sin, Mary received the further gift of being preserved from all actual, personal sin. This the Church holds to be an article of faith. The Council of Trent declares: "If any one assert that man, after he is once justified, is able to avoid throughout his lifetime all, even venial, sin, except by a special divine privilege, as the Church holds in regard to the Blessed Virgin, let him be anathema."

The Church does not teach that Our Lady had in any sense lost her free will, so as not to be able to choose between good and evil. The Church does not teach that there was in the Blessed Virgin any intrin-

sic impossibility of sinning, as there was in Christ, and there is in the Blessed in heaven. No! for Mary was purely human, and did not enjoy the Beatific Vision on earth. But the Church teaches that, as a matter of fact, Our Lady never sinned, and that this was due to a special privilege granted her by God. This privilege was the natural sequence of the absence of original sin from her soul. Her nature was perfectly balanced, the lower passions of anger and concupiscence never rebelled against her higher reason. The first inordinate stirrings of our lower nature, even though we do not ultimately consent to them, and our resistance may be a source of merit, are still objectively the outcome of original sin, and, as such, a moral taint, though not subjectively sinful. The Mother of God was without original sin, and hence happily lacked those temptations which make the perfect observance of God's law so hard to us. Moreover, God gave her the grace of final perseverance. He so shielded, He so guarded, He so encompassed with supernatural helps her human will, that she never fell into any sin, not even venial sin.

This actual freedom from personal sin in Mary was believed in the Catholic Church from the first, and this belief is even more conspicuous and plain than belief in the Immaculate Conception. That three Greek Fathers between A.D. 350 and 450, St. Basil, St. Chrysostom and St. Cyril, use a casual expression irreconcilable with Mary's sinlessness is due to a local and temporary misunderstanding, and brings out by its very contrast the vast volume of a unanimous tradition which has come down the ages. There is, in fact, something incongruous, if not almost monstrous, in

the supposition that the Mother of God actually sinned, at least after she conceived and bore her Divine Son. Christians would have shuddered at the thought. It was only some fierce, fanatical Reformers who suggested actual sin in her whom all Christendom had ever called the All-Holy, Panagia, Sanctissima.

§3. *Her Perpetual Virginity.*

We have already dealt with Mary's privilege of virginity co-existent with motherhood, when discussing the Virgin birth of Christ. It remains for us to state that the Church teaches as of defined Catholic faith that Mary remained a virgin throughout life. The Church coined the term "Ever-Virgin," *Aeiparthenos* in Greek, *Semper Virgo* in Latin, *Aminath Bthulutha* in Syriac, to express this dogma. In opposition to the swift spread of monachism there arose in Rome about A.D. 380 a heresy claiming that the married state was as good as that of voluntary virginity. In support of this contention they startled and scandalised the Christian world by the previously unheard-of assertion that Our Lady had several children by St. Joseph.

Pope Siricius, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Jerome at once denounced these novel errors, which were condemned in a number of local councils, and led to the definition of Mary's perpetual virginity in the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils. The hatred of monastic life caused a revival of the heresy twelve hundred years later in countries that adopted the Reformation.

Amongst us in England, happily, Bishop Lightfoot's masterly essay on "The Brethren of the Lord," has made unprejudiced people realize that neither

history nor Scripture gives countenance to those who assert that Mary had other children than Our Lord. It is true that Lightfoot inclines towards the view that " the brethren " of the Lord in the New Testament are sons of St. Joseph by a former marriage, rather than sons of a sister of Our Blessed Lady as is commonly held amongst Catholics now. As a matter of fact the former view was held by the Fathers previous to St. Jerome's solution, who proved them to be Our Lord's cousins. But the older view seems not to have rested on any genuine tradition, but rather on two apocryphal documents of the second century, which told of a previous marriage of St. Joseph as an easy way to account for " the brethren," whilst maintaining the perpetual virginity of the Mother of God. The easiest way out of a difficulty is not always the true one. The theory that " the brethren " were sons of Mary of Cleophas, Our Lady's sister, seems to account better for the many allusions in the New Testament to Our Lord's kinsmen.

Such texts as : Joseph " knew her not till she brought forth her firstborn son," do not imply that St. Joseph did so afterwards, any more than the text : " Sit thou at my right hand until I make thy enemies thy footstool " (Ps. cix, 1) imply that Christ will not sit at the Father's right hand after His enemies lie defeated at His feet. The term " firstborn " means a mother's first child, whether followed by others or not. The words " before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost," do not imply that they came together afterwards any more than saying : " Judas did not repent before he died," means that he repented afterwards.

But it is idle to discuss Bible texts with those who possess so little understanding of the Incarnation and so little common sense in reading the Scriptures as not to shudder at the thought that the Virgin-Mother of God should of her own free will have lost her heavenly privilege or that Joseph, a just man, instead of being the guardian of a Maiden-Mother, should have robbed her of her glory.

Joseph was indeed the husband of Mary, nor has the Church ever doubted the reality of his marriage with the Mother of God, but a marriage can be true and real, even when the partners to that sacred union have agreed not to use their mutual rights. It is even piously believed, and the Scriptures seem to suggest, that Mary had vowed her virginity to God before the angel Gabriel declared unto her the secret of God.

§4. *Her Assumption into Heaven.*

There is a final privilege with which we believe God crowned the earthly life of His Mother, viz., her bodily assumption into heaven. This Assumption has not yet been the object of a formal definition by the Church. In 1870 two hundred and four Fathers at the Council of the Vatican proposed the Assumption of Our Lady as a matter to be defined as of Catholic faith, but the labours of that council were interrupted by the Franco-Prussian war. Although therefore the Assumption is not at present a defined dogma, the fact remains that the feast of the Assumption was celebrated in Palestine in the fifth century, and that the Assumption is mentioned by St. Gregory, Bishop of Tours, in France, before A.D. 538, and that within a few years

from that date a feast of the Assumption, whether on January 18th or August 15th, was common to East and West and has never been interrupted since. If the law of prayer is the law of faith, the fourteen hundred years' observance of a solemnity in honour of the fact of the Assumption can, on Catholic principles, hardly be explained except by accepting its truth.

We grant that on purely historical grounds we have no means of proving the assumption of Mary's body into heaven. We possess no accounts of eye-witnesses of the fact, nor of others who demonstrably derived the information from such eye-witnesses. But the Assumption may have taken place without eye-witnesses, or, if there were eye-witnesses, they may not have left any contemporary record of what they saw, and yet the Assumption might be a fact, and a fact revealed by God to the Church.

In the fourth and fifth centuries some apocryphal writings appeared, purporting to give miraculous details about Mary's death and assumption. These writings are indeed worthless, except as witnessing the faith of the Church, at the time, in the fact of the Assumption, which these forged writings embroidered with all sorts of marvels and legends.

It is remarkable that the Church, which rejected these writings, and even officially placed at least one of them on the list of prescribed books, should continue to hold the fact of the Assumption itself, without these legendary embellishments. To say that the belief in the bodily assumption of Mary is based on these apocryphal writings is a gratuitous assertion entirely beyond the available historical evidence. Even on mere historical principles, it is

more natural to suppose that both the growth of the legends and the observance of the feast days are the outcome of the common conviction of Christians that God had not left the body of His mother to the corruption of the grave, than to suppose that a set of apocryphal writings, notoriously frowned upon by ecclesiastical authority, should give birth to the belief in the Assumption. Had these apocryphal writings been the source of the belief, surely the rather pretty and plausible legends would have been adopted together with the fact itself. Whether the fact was made known to the Apostles by finding the tomb empty, or by some internal and direct revelation of God, or whether the Apostles by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost realized that Mary, as the Second Eve, and without original sin, could not be subject to the corruption of the grave, we shall perhaps never know.

We know that Mary died, not on account of original sin, for she had none, but to conform to the death of her Son, who died for our sakes. We can see no reason why after death her sinless and sacred body should be surrendered to the horrors of the tomb, and why her soul only, without the body and therefore without consummated happiness, should have to wait till the last day for the complete fulfilment of her glory. For us poor sinners this lot is truly right and just. We all have been tainted by original sin, and by numberless actual sins as well. Though we die in grace, and therefore shall see God in our disembodied state, it is meet and just that, as redeemed sinners, we should wait for the resurrection of our body till Christ comes again to judge the living and the dead. In

Mary's case no such reason exists, and our spontaneous Christian sentiment leads us to believe that Christ did not withhold from His Mother that share of immortality which she had never forfeited by sin, and which seems due to her co-operation in the work of our redemption. If God made a second Eve, it would indeed be strange that He should give her less than He would have given to the first one, had she not sinned in Paradise.

The celebration of the feast of the Assumption is the expression of that agelong conviction, and historians, even without being theologians, ought to see that this conviction is more likely to be based on Apostolic teaching than on some legendary tales of the fourth century. Although the legends of the presence of the Apostles at her death, of the open tomb full of roses, of sweet melodies filling the air may be the utterance of Christian poetry, yet the belief that after death God raised her body from death and joined it again to her soul in heaven is much more than poetic legend. Whether this belief is actually an integral part of the Christian revelation—in such sense that he who dares to deny it, falls into heresy and is cut off from Catholic unity—only a Pope speaking *ex cathedra*, or a General Council, can decide. Meanwhile, no Catholic can deny it without incurring the note of extreme temerity, and the true children of God will continue to rejoice at the thought that God-Incarnate and His Mother are together in heaven, not in soul alone, but in body and soul, for all eternity.

PART V

THE INCARNATION IN HISTORY

Chapter I
THE HISTORY OF THE DOGMA

Chapter II
MODERN ERRORS

Chapter III
PAGAN CHRISTS

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORY OF THE DOGMA

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§1. *The Dogma in Apostatic Times.*

God's revelation through Christ is both unchangeable and complete. No man can alter it, no man can add unto it. In this sense revealed truths have no human history, they share the immutability of God. When we speak of the history of dogma we do not

mean either that revealed truths have increased in number, or that an individual revealed truth has been extended so as to mean more than it meant in the first instance when it was first stated by Christ and proclaimed by the Apostles. We mean that in the course of centuries man has more keenly grasped, more thoroughly understood and more correctly expressed the unchangeable truth, once for all given to him by God. Man can, as the years go by, more clearly see what a revealed truth involves, and how it is related to the numberless truths, which he has acquired by his natural reason. Although man often merely struggles to find the right word and formula to express his thought, in the story of dogma it has not been merely a question of words. It has often been a question of thinking with greater precision and grasping with greater vigour the fact that God has revealed. As the Church consists of many millions of individuals, this process has caused some of the fiercest mental and verbal wars in history, and even swayed the activities of armies and empires for centuries.

Many men have erred and many men have been wilful in the maintenance of their error and resisted the infallible authority of the Catholic Church. In the welter of human opinions the Catholic Church has been the guide and the leader of thought, restraining, condemning and punishing those who attempted to alter the faith once delivered to the Saints. This is specially true of the central dogma of the Christian faith, the Incarnation of God.

God, though one, is verily Three Persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost ; and Jesus Christ is God the Son, made man for us. That is

a full statement of the doctrine of the Incarnation, and in a sense there is nothing to add. He that holds it and holds it in its simple and true sense, holds the fulness of the truth. However, the human mind is restlessly inquisitive, and revealed truths do not escape its inquisitiveness. In trying to solve the problems which his own hunger for more understanding has created, man has no doubt increased his grasp upon, and deepened his insight into, the mystery of the Incarnation but in many instances he has also, alas! gone astray and obscured and perverted the mystery. These very perversions, however, and confusions have aided by contrast to bring out in stronger relief the shades of truth, which otherwise might have passed without further consideration.

Hence the interest of the study of the history of dogma. To those who view it aright, it is rich in incident and thrilling adventure.

G. K. Chesterton has somewhere a grandiose passage describing how the Chariot of Holy Church is swiftly drawn along over the weird and wayward path of human wilfulness, perversion, pride and folly. The Chariot indeed reels and rolls sometimes swaying as if ready to fall, yet never really losing its balance, sometimes nearing a precipice yet ever by an invisible Hand prevented from sinking into its depths. Thus it speeds forward through a thousand dangers always erect and safely carrying its treasure of truth to the end of its agelong journey, for its Driver is One who is all prudent and all-wise, the Divine Spirit, of whom Christ said : He will guide you into all truth.

§1. *The Dogma in Apostolic Times.*

Modernists tell us that the New Testament presents us with three stages of development in doctrine concerning the person of Christ. The first that of the Synoptics, Matthew, Mark and Luke, the second that of St. Paul, the third that of St. John. These three stages, they say, represent first the primitive Church in Palestine, then the Gentile Churches under the influence of St. Paul, and finally, Ephesian speculations typified in the Fourth Gospel. In the first stage, an adoptionist theory is put forward: Christ is the Jewish Messias, the highest messenger of God, His sonship is an adoption by God, and exaltation at His right hand after death. In the second, a theory of a pre-existing Christ is put forward by St. Paul, and Christ becomes identified with the Spirit, and Christ as Spirit, pre-existing to His human birth, and for ever living in heaven after His ascension, is preached. In the last or Johannine stage Christ is identified with the Word or "Logos" of God, or God's personified Wisdom, a hellenistic speculation, which is cleverly employed to raise Christ out of the sphere of creation, and lift him to the level of the Godhead.

These modernistic speculations are mere imaginative reconstructions of history, which have no connection with reality and contradict the available evidence. There were no such stages of development. St. Paul was converted to Christianity four or five years after Christ's resurrection, and his epistles were all written before A.D. 64, the date of his death. There was no time for development. Pauline "views of Christ" co-existed with "primitive Palestinian" views and did not succeed them. Paul's ideas were those of

the Christian community. There are doctrinal differences on record amongst early Christians regarding the observance of the Mosaic Law, there are none regarding the person of Christ. Had there been, they would have found expression in the New Testament. St. Peter gave St. Paul the right hand of fellowship in the work of converting the world, and when St. Paul towards the end of his life returned to Jerusalem, St. James welcomed him as a fellowworker, and the Jewish Church under St. James' care saw in St. Paul a true apostle of Christ. It is historically inconceivable that St. Paul was in anyway at variance with the Church of Jerusalem on the very essence and core of Christianity, belief in the divinity of Christ. St. Peter left us one undoubted epistle, and this is completely Pauline in doctrine and outlook. Again, St. Matthew, Mark and Luke were written, not before, but after, or at most contemporarily with, the Pauline Epistles. Hence there can be no question of "development."

Lastly, St. Mark and St. Luke were actual companions of St. Paul on his preaching tours. That their "Christology" should have differed from that of their famous companion is an untenable supposition. Silas and Barnabas were fully trusted spokesmen of the Jerusalem community, and were also companions of St. Paul. Surely, their preaching concerning Christ can in no way have differed from his. If early Christianity had been preached by a discordant band of warring theologians, it would never have spread and succeeded. Hence a difference between a "Pauline" and a "Synoptic" Christ is a wayward fancy without documentary evidence.

So likewise without any historical value is a distinction between a "Pauline" and a "Johannine" Christ. The difference in date between Pauline and Johannine writings is at most thirty years. With incredible swiftness Christianity had spread throughout the Roman Empire. In the sixties, Nero had put to death an "ingens multitudo," a vast multitude, of Christians, according to Tacitus. By the end of the century there were Christian communities from Gaul to Bithynia. In the first years of the second century they formed in Bithynia apparently the bulk of the population, according to Pliny. That a new "Johannine" Christ should have been foisted on this far-flung community from Spain to Persia, and that the former "Christ" should have been abandoned and forgotten and have left no traces, no historian would admit, who had no theological axe to grind.

The use of the term "Word" by St. John may be due to the Greek term Logos or the Jewish term Memra. This is a matter of indifference. Any idea will seek spontaneous expression in the current phraseology of the time, and of the local surroundings where the idea takes root. Potent ideas either employ or create terms for their utterance, and spread amongst men. Terms do not create ideas, but are created on account of them. An old thought may be expressed in a new word, and the old thought remain unchanged. Words are like coins; they have exchange value. Where there is no real wealth, coins are useless, so where there is no pre-existing idea, a word is only hollow sound. But given real wealth, I may express it in *any* coinage, without making any difference. Forty shillings is the same as two pounds.

St. John expressed in the term, " Word," what St. Paul had expressed in a different way. For St. Paul God was Father, Son and Spirit, and the Son was Christ, and Christ was man. Therefore to St. Paul Christ was God made man. According to St. Paul, in Christ dwelt " the fulness of the Godhead bodily," " Jesus, being in the form of God, took upon himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men." To invent some discrepancy or development between these truths and the truth expressed by St. John in the words : " The Word was God, and the Word was made flesh " is to invent a distinction without a difference. The Christ of John is evidently the same as the Christ of Paul. He is to both, on the one hand, one in nature with God, and, on the other hand, one in nature with us men, though He is one individual, one single person. Paul and John do not differ in their doctrine of the Incarnation, however grateful we may be to St. John for having used an expression which helps us to grasp less inadequately the truth revealed.

To see a triple Christology in the New Testament is a confession of inability to grasp the unity of truth under a variety of expression. It is to ascribe the origin of Christianity to a set of people who were not quite certain who Christ was !

The matter would not deserve the notice of serious men were it not that the lack of clear thinking and of historical sense has led modern people into the strangest vagaries.

§2. *The Gnostics, Separating the Aeon Christ from the Man Jesus.*

The earliest error concerning the Incarnation we know of is that of the Gnostics, combated already by St. John. They divided Christ. God had indeed a Son, who redeemed us, but this Divine Son was not identical with Jesus of Nazareth, though He used Jesus as the instrument of His redemption. Gnostics, or, to put their name in English, "Knowledge-people," claimed secret information and superior understanding in matters of religion. They claimed an esoteric doctrine not known to the bulk of the faithful. In reality they attempted a fusion of ancient paganism with some doctrines of Christianity. The idea of redemption by some divine emanation of the deity, they accepted, but "the folly of the Cross" they rejected. An Aeon, that is, some divine being, emanating or flowing out of the supreme God and All-Father, had come down from heaven and descended on Jesus of Nazareth, had dwelt in him, spoken through him, and done miracles through him. This divine Spirit had come upon him at his baptism and left him on the Cross, hence the cry: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The first of these opponents of the Incarnation was an Egyptian Jew, Cerinthus by name, who, like Simon Magus the Samaritan, had accepted Christianity for a while during the lifetime of the Apostles, and then became its bitterest adversary. Travelling far and wide, he everywhere tried to thwart Christian teaching, setting up a rival Jewish-gnostic school. Hence the ancient story that St. John, when at the Thermæ in Ephesus, heard that Cerinthus happened to be in the

building and cried : " Let us flee, lest the presence of such an enemy of truth cause the walls to collapse." St. John is said to have written his Gospel with Cerinthus' heresy in view.

Cerinthus was a Jew, and in consequence did not attribute the creation of the world and its redemption to an emanation of the deity but to an angel. Christ was really a spirit or an angel, who had dwelt for a time in the historic figure of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus and Christ were two different persons. Christ was impassible and immortal and never suffered. He was not born. He did not die. Jesus was a mere man, born of Joseph and Mary, as other children are born. Jesus died on the Cross when the indwelling Christ had left him, but Christ will raise Jesus from the dead. Apparently the resurrection of Jesus has not yet taken place, though of course Christ appeared to his disciples.

After Cerinthus came Basilides, who was apparently not a Jew. He was a student at Antioch c. A.D. 100, and he thought out a system which was a mixture of emanationism, Judaism, and Christianity. He avoided " the shame of the Cross " by the extraordinary expedient of substituting Simon of Cyrene for Christ at the moment of the crucifixion.

After Basilides came Valentinus. He was originally a Christian from Egypt who came to Rome, where he apostatised, and after staying in Rome till A.D. 165 taught in Cyprus till his death. According to him, Our Lord had a visible body, which was capable of suffering, but which was none the less immaterial and not born of the Virgin Mary, but only passing through her, without borrowing from her substance.

The weird fantasies of these Gnostics, and their strange attempts to mix Oriental and dualistic ideas with Christianity, fill us to-day with surprise and sometimes with disgust, but they were once a danger to the faithful. The Gnostics affected a superior spiritualiyt to that of the ordinary faithful. Their fundamental error was the condemnation of all matter as evil, and therefore the denial that God really took a human nature and became flesh.

§3. *The Docetæ, denying the reality of Christ's Manhood.*

Sometimes simple-minded faithful were in peril of being infected by this error to the extent of doubting the reality of Christ's body, which they imagined to be a phantom, a vision, an appearance, not true solid matter, so that Christ's sufferings were only semblance-sufferings and not true pains.

Those who were misled, were called Docetæ or "Appearance-people." They troubled the Church throughout the second century, and became the authors of apocryphal books which they foisted on believers, thus secretly instilling their errors. About A.D. 200 Bishop Serapion of Antioch was making his canonical visitation in his diocese, and came to the village Rhossus on the coast. He found that the Christian community there read a certain book, which went by the name of Gospel of Peter. They were taken to task by neighbouring Christians for reading this book. They felt distressed about this opposition and consulted the bishop. He seems to have treated the matter lightly, without reading the book. Trusting in the judgment of the priest Marcian, he said: "If

that's what troubles you, read away!" Later on, he became better informed. He found the book in use in a sectarian meeting in Antioch. He then read it himself and condemned it, because it made some additions to the Gospel story, additions which were doctrinally unsound. This apocryphal Gospel was written about A.D. 150 and was found again, or rather a large fragment of it, in an Egyptian tomb some forty years ago. It contains such suspicious sentences as that when Christ was nailed to the Cross, "He was silent as having no pain at all," and also the following, referring to Christ's death: "And the Lord cried out and said: My power, my power, thou hast forsaken me. And when He had said this, He was taken up."

This Gospel of Peter is only one specimen of an extensive Gnostic-docetic literature, which attempted to corrupt the simple faith of Christians by "pious" books and legends during the very early centuries, Happily the Church was very vigilant and these worthless and fabulous "books of devotion," often disfigured by childish or incongruous legends, never gained much vogue except in obscure and isolated localities. St. Ignatius of Antioch, who was martyred c. A.D. 110 argues in his letters written on his way to martyrdom against a Judaistic-docetic sect, which held that Christ had only suffered in appearance, and which abstained from the Blessed Eucharist in consequence, because they denied it to be the body of Christ. St. Ignatius repeats a score of times that Christ's conception, birth, eating and drinking, sufferings, death and resurrection were all real and not merely semblances. He professes his belief in the Incarnation in such words as these: "There is one Healer, both carnal

and spiritual, both born and unborn, God, who became in the flesh, in death the True Life, both from Mary and from God, first subject to suffering and then not subject to suffering : Jesus Christ, Our Lord" (Eph. vii, 2).

St. Ignatius is the first in a long list of early Fathers, who combated the "Appearance theory," till the heresy seems to have died out, but it lasted till the fifth century amongst the followers of Marcion. This wealthy merchant, originally a Christian and son of a bishop, came from Sinope in Asia Minor to Rome in A.D. 140 and founded there a rival church, which spread throughout the world. As Marcion held that the good God could in no way come in touch with material things, God, who manifested Himself in Christ, was in no way endowed with a material body. Christ's whole life, sufferings, and death were pure appearance. He was never born at all, He had no mother at all, but suddenly appeared in the fifteenth year of the Emperor Tiberius. Marcion accepted only the Gospel of St. Luke, and even from this he cut out all that contradicted his theory. Theodoret in the middle of the fifth century still found ten thousand Marcionites in his diocese of Cyrrhus.

About A.D. 260 the bishop of Antioch, Paul of Samosata by name, astounded and scandalized the Christian world, by holding that the three persons of the Blessed Trinity were not really distinct, but only aspects or powers of the divinity, and that the Word or wisdom of God only dwelt in Christ as in a temple. According to him, Christ, though the highest of all, differed from the prophets not in nature, but only in degree of inspiration. He was indeed born of a virgin and was

adopted by God, who gave him the right to judge the world, and bestowed upon Him divine dignity, so that one might speak of him as " the god born of the virgin," " God appearing in Nazareth," but in essence he was the Temple of God, not God himself. Scandalized Christendom convoked a council of some eighty bishops and deposed Paul of Samosata. But this man, who had risen from low birth to fabulous riches, and was Viceroy of Queen Zenobia in Antioch, maintained himself for a time in the episcopal residence by the aid of the secular power, and continued his immoralities as well as his false doctrine. Fortunately the town was taken by the Roman Emperor Aurelian, and when the Christians appealed to him, he decreed that the Church property should belong to the Christian bishop who was in union with the bishop of Rome, and Paul was driven out. Thus ended a fearful scandal, which seems not to have had further consequences.

§4. *The Apollinarists, denying the Rational Soul in Christ.*

For a while, no further heresy about the Incarnation arose, though a number of errors about the Blessed Trinity showed themselves in the East.

The great Arian heresy dealt with the relation of God the Son to God the Father in the Blessed Trinity, and therefore does not directly concern us here. But it is sad to relate that one of the greatest champions of the true faith after St. Athanasius, a noble and venerable figure who had heroically fought the battle of truth against the tyranny of Arianism, sinned against the truth of the Incarnation. This friend and fellow-worker of St. Athanasius, universally admired by

the Catholic world for his zeal and his genius, a man gifted with talents and apparent religious fervour beyond thousands, alas! in the latter part of his life fell into grievous error concerning the Incarnation, and became an obstinate heresiarch. We refer to Apollinaris of Laodicea. The tragedy is well described by Newman in his *Church of the Fathers*. Apollinaris thought it impossible that one person could possess two complete natures, hence in order to safeguard, as he thought, the divine personality of Christ he denied the completeness of Christ's human nature, ascribing to Christ a body and a human principle of sensitive life, but denying that He had a human intellectual soul. Christ's mind, he said, was not human, but instead of a human mind stood the divine intelligence of God the Son. So likewise Christ had no human will, for Apollinaris imagined that the freedom of a human will implied necessarily the possibility of sin. Christ could not sin, therefore He had no human will, so argued the unfortunate bishop of Laodicea.

The Church was most considerate towards the person of Apollinaris. It condemned indeed the error, but spared the name of the bishop. In A.D. 375 Apollinaris himself openly broke with the Church and for fifteen years acted as the leader of a sect, appointing bishops as far as he could in opposition to the Catholic bishops. For a short while, the sect flourished, but, repeatedly condemned by Rome and interdicted by Imperial authority, it soon languished and died. It rose again in a slightly different form amongst the Monophysites, about whom later. Apollinarists made secret propaganda for their theories by literary frauds

on a large scale. They fathered their writings on men of orthodox renown, on St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, St. Athanasius, and Popes Julius and Felix. They even corrupted the texts of some ancient writings such as the epistles of St. Ignatius, and the Didascalia of the Apostles. Through these frauds they did incalculable harm, for they misled many, and paved the way for subsequent errors.

§5. *The Nestorians, denying the One Person in Christ.*

Others led by the same fundamental error as Apollinaris, followed it to its full and logical conclusion. One person, they said, cannot have two natures. In Christ there are certainly two *natures* said one faction, therefore there must be in Him two personalities, however closely united. In Christ there is certainly only one *person* said the other faction, therefore there must be in Him only one nature; however different humanity and divinity may be, they must coalesce somehow into one thing. In Christ there is but one person, said the Catholic Church, but there are two natures, which do not coalesce or mix in any way, though held by the one person of God the Son. If the first faction were right, Christ would not be really God, if the second, Christ would not be really man. But our faith teaches that He is both. In the agelong struggle which ensued almost halt the Christian world fell away from the Catholic Church, and remained separated from its unity, till Mohammed's flood swept Eastern Christianity completely away. Some few thousands to-day survive as miserable remnants of those proud heresies. The first mentioned are around Mosul, the second mentioned in Egypt, and both factions are so

ignorant and uninstructed that they hardly understand what precise belief separates them from the bulk of Christendom.

Two bishops in Cilicia, in the fierce desire to vindicate the true Godhead of Christ against the Arians, and the completeness of His manhood against the Apollinarists, fell into the error of so emphasising the distinctness of Christ's two natures that they spoke of Christ as if He were two persons, a Son of God by nature, and a Son of God by adoption. Both bishops, Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia, a small town not far from Tarsus, died in peace and communion with the Catholic Church.

Their errors were unobserved, or not sufficiently realized, during their lifetime. The prestige of their great name, for they both were famous professors and preachers at Antioch before they became bishops, their zeal and their piety, their intimate friendship with Saint John Chrysostom, made people blind to the erroneousness of their expressions, and the schools at Antioch became gradually infected with wrong doctrines. Pope Damasus in A.D. 379 had condemned the expression " two sons, one born before all ages, the other after the taking of flesh from the Virgin." The Second General Council in A.D. 381 had condemned it likewise, but, though in consequence this precise expression was avoided, the real error in thought continued.

The matter became more complicated by a difference of language. The Greek has *two* words which roughly correspond to the one Latin word *persona*. The first Greek word, *prosopon*, might easily appear the most exact rendering of the Latin. Both these words, Latin and Greek, were originally applied to the charac-

ters in a play, the figures, personalities, of personages represented on a stage. Both words in strict etymology mean "a mask," but were currently used for human individuals, persons. But the Greek word hid an ambiguity, because it remained too reminiscent of its original meaning of a character sustained by outward behaviour, a personage, rather than a person, or an individual. There was another Greek word *hypostasis*, which was more exact in rendering the idea underlying the Latin word "persona," although etymologically it might not seem so, for it is verbally "substantia" or substance. This word however was well suited to signify : subsistence, a rational individual, subsisting in and by himself—in other words—a person.

Now heterodox people in the East were quite ready to acknowledge that in Christ there was but one "prosopon" though there two natures, because the man Christ Jesus was so completely united to God the Son, so completely indwelt by God, and eternally joined to Him, that he sustained the character of God, and became with Him one "personage," which they were ready and eager to worship with divine adoration. With all their emphasis on the union of Christ with God, it became evident that for them Jesus and God the Son remained always two distinct individuals, two persons. God had taken to Himself *a* man, but God Himself had not become man, according to them. God had taken to Himself not merely a human nature, but a human individual, and this individual, however closely clasped to the heart of God and pervaded by Him, never lost his identity distinct from God. They evaded the statement that God and Christ were one

hypostasis, one subsistency, one person, in the full sense of the word.

These errors moved underground for a considerable time till the mine was sprung with dramatic suddenness. The court at Constantinople had carried off from Antioch in 428 a fashionable preacher, and made him bishop of the Capital. Nestorius was his name. The man was a restless spirit, he posed as a great "hammer of heretics," bloodshed accompanied his fierce efforts to exterminate heresy everywhere, but he himself had a confused and muddled mind, more capable of rhetoric than of theology. Not long after his appointment, a priest about Christmastide preached a sermon warning the people at Constantinople against the use of the expression "Mother of God" for the Virgin Mary, as she had given birth not to God but to man. The astonished and scandalized multitude raised a tumult in the Church and when to their still greater amazement their bishop Nestorius took the preacher's part the city was in an uproar. Nestorius treated the protesting clergy with brutality.

The news soon spread and reached Alexandria. Nestorius himself wrote to Rome to explain matters. St. Cyril, bishop of Alexandria wrote likewise to Rome to accuse Nestorius. Pope Celestine wrote to St. Cyril to go to Constantinople and to obtain from Nestorius in writing a statement that he accepted the Roman faith on the Incarnation. In case he refused to do so within ten days, Cyril had to depose him and procure the appointment of a successor. These strict conditions came to the knowledge of John, bishop of Antioch, the bosom friend of Nestorius. Notwithstanding their apparent hardness John be-

sought Nestorius to sign them, for John felt certain of the orthodoxy of his friend. Nestorius refused. He held that the Pope had been circumvented by that crafty Egyptian Pharao Cyril of Alexandria.

A synod was called at Ephesus in A.D. 431. It condemned and deposed Nestorius, and vindicated for Mary the title *Theotokos*, or Mother of God. Nestorius was exiled to the Egyptian desert where he lived on for 20 years. The last work he wrote in self-defence, when he was tottering into the grave, has been discovered of late years. It is a pitiful monument of obstinacy and confusion of thought.

§6. *The Monophysites, denying the Two Natures in Christ.*

Unfortunately, St. Cyril himself, however orthodox in thought, had used an expression which was faulty and misleading. He had spoken of " One nature of God the Word incarnate," meaning by " physis " or nature, a subsistent reality or a person. This mistaken expression stiffened the opposition of Nestorius and his followers, and caused endless trouble. When St. Cyril explained his meaning to John of Antioch, it was realized that St. Cyril was correct in thought, though not in word, but though the Patriarch and some of his immediate suffragans understood this, it confused the minds of many. The Council of Ephesus was rejected by the Christians of the extreme East, by the Syriac-speaking churches of Mesopotamia, Syria and Persia. Nestorianism flourished for a thousand years and spread to the confines of China and for a time was the great rival of Christianity. A few thou-

sand Nestorians still remain in or about the city of Mosul to-day.

Among those who defended the unity of person in Christ against Nestorianism the pendulum swung too far in the opposite direction, and a completely different error arose, the error of denying the two natures of Christ, and maintaining that after the union of the Godhead and manhood, the manhood was absorbed into the Godhead as one tiny drop of water is swallowed up in the ocean. This error really rose from the same root as the previous one: one person=one nature. In Christ the person is certainly divine, therefore the human nature is somehow divine, or rather vanishes and is taken up into the divinity. Against this new error, the Church had to maintain the truth that Christ was and ever remained true man. The trouble started through an aged abbot of a monastery near Constantinople, called Eutyches. His great monastery of 300 monks gave him a great standing in the ecclesiastical world. Moreover he was godfather of the Chamberlain Chrysaphus, which made him omnipotent at the court. This holy old abbot taught most unmistakably that Christ's manhood was not really the same as ours, though it was taken from the Virgin Mary. He was brought before the Bishop of Constantinople, St. Flavian, and condemned Nov. 22nd, 448, but his powerful friends at court obtained the reversal of the sentence at the so-called Robber-synod or Latrocinium at Ephesus in 449. At this scandalous meeting, St. Flavian was almost done to death and died soon after, the bishops were threatened and maltreated, the Papal legates were disregarded, and held captive, the church was filled with a

wild rabble. The author of all the confusion was Dioscuros, bishop of Alexandria, supported by the court of Constantinople. Rarely if ever, in Church history, did more disgraceful scenes happen at a meeting of bishops. The emperor Theodosius II died 28 July, 450 from a fall from his horse. Marcian, his successor, accepted the Catholic Faith.

On October 8, 451, the council of Chalcedon met, and six hundred bishops acclaimed the teaching of Pope Leo the Great, and declared: "We believe in Jesus Christ, who for us and our salvation hath been made manifest, from the virgin Mary according to the flesh, as one and the same Christ, Son, Lord. Only-begotten, in two natures, without confusion or change, without division or separation, the difference of natures being in no wise suppressed by their union, on the contrary, either nature retaining its own particularity, both concurring to form one single person, and one hypostasis." Officially and in authoritative quarters the new heresy was suppressed. Pope Leo's doctrine was the doctrine of the Catholic Church, the question was decided and at an end within the Church.

§7. *The Monothelites, denying the Two Wills in Christ.*

Alas, the heresy was not ended. Wild tumults arose, especially at Alexandria. Monophysitism, the theory of the existence of only one nature in Christ, was organized as a rival to the Catholic Church, and large parts of Egypt and Syria fell away from the unity of Christendom. Nestorius and Eutyches seemed to have conquered almost all Eastern Christianity, with the exception perhaps of Asia Minor. The Byzantine emperors, who perpetually interfered in religious

matters, tried their utmost to reconcile the contending parties, especially the Monophysites and the Catholics, for the Nestorians lived too far to the East and outside the Roman Empire to come under the influence of Constantinople. The emperors, who were inspired largely by political motives made confusion worse confounded. In A.D. 553 as a political measure they made Pope Vigilius condemn three writers then long dead, Theodorus of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Ibas of Edessa, because of opinions expressed in their writings, although all three had died in communion with the Catholic Church. The Pope was loath to anathematize the dead, who had departed in peace with the Church, even if their writings contained passages which apparently favoured Nestorianism. This caused years of conflict after which Sergius, who was Patriarch of Constantinople, from A.D. 610 to 638, in league with the emperor Heraclius, invented a new doctrine. This was meant as a means of reconciliation with the Monophysites, or One-nature-men, whose bitter fury against the Catholics was undermining the unity of the Empire. This doctrine was intended to meet them half-way. It was true, as Catholics held, that Christ had two natures, the divine and the human ; but (said the new compromise) He had only one *Will*, one energy and operation. Three hundred years earlier, Apollinaris had invented the heresy of the *one mind*, God's divine intelligence being supposed to have taken the place of Christ's human understanding. This precise heresy was not now renewed, but one similar and parallel to it. Christ was said to have no human will, energy or activity ; though His human nature was real, it *acted* only in a

divine way. These new heretics went by the name of Monothelites or " One-Will-people."

And now we Catholics have to tell a sad and sorrowful story, the fall of a Pope. Pope Honorius, although himself not a Monothelite, forgot his supreme duty of defining the true faith, treated the matter as a mere " quibble of schoolmasters," imposed silence on both parties, telling them to speak neither of two wills nor one will, as of course Christ as man always willed what God willed. The Pope's conduct was a dreadful dereliction of duty, though it did not touch his infallibility. A Pope claims infallibility when he *does* define. Pope Honorius clearly sets aside any idea of defining, and with a careless gesture leaves the matter undecided. The Pope issued no solemn and public declaration in the matter at all, but in some official, though semi-private, letters to Sergius of Constantinople, begged him to leave the matter alone.

This was exactly what Sergius the crafty Patriarch and the Emperor wanted. The letters of the Pope were used to the uttermost to persuade people that they could believe in only one will in Christ, if they so chose. Emperor and Patriarch set to work to reconcile opposing factions by the theory of One Will. The strength of their position lay in the semi-official tolerance of the Holy See. Subsequent Popes did their utmost to undo the harm done by the negligence of their predecessor. Pope Martin I died a martyr's death in the Crimea, at the hands of the monothelite faction in the Byzantine Empire, to atone for the fall of Honorius. Pope Agatho finally in 680 through his legates presided over the VI General Council, which solemnly condemned the One-Will-theory. Pope Hono-

rius' name was inserted amongst those reprobated as "heretics" because, as the Council said, "we find by the letters which he wrote to Sergius that he followed in everything that man's opinion and strengthened his impious doctrines." Pope Leo II, who confirmed this council likewise condemned Honorius "because he did not adorn this Apostolic church by teaching apostolic tradition, but allowed her, the stainless one, to be stained," or, as he wrote about the same time to the bishops of Spain, "because he did not, as beseems the apostolic Authority extinguish the flame of heretical doctrine at the beginning, but by negligence furthered it."

After this tragic episode, it seems as if heresy had for a time exhausted itself, and as if the restless Eastern mind felt incapable of inventing a further error concerning the Incarnation.

§8. *The Adoptionists, denying Full Sonship in Christ.*

The West during all this long period had happily continued in the almost undisturbed possession of the true faith, but in the eighth century, a new error crept in amongst the faithful, through a certain bishop, whose See was close to the southern or Spanish slopes of the Pyrenees: Felix of Urgel, who followed in this matter Elipandus of Toledo. This new error went by the name of Adoptionism, because it taught that Christ, though He was the real Son of God in His divine nature was only the adopted Son of God in His human nature.

The error is indeed obvious to us. Adoption is a term applicable only to a person, and as in Christ there is only one person, the person of God the Son, the term "adoption" is entirely out of place when

speaking of the Incarnation. Adoption is a legal term, whereby a person, not born of certain parents, is for the purpose of civil standing reputed to be what he is not really, viz. the true son or daughter of those parents.

Elipandus was led into his error by his zeal in combating an otherwise unknown heretic, Migetius, who confused Christ's eternal generation with His generation in time from the Virgin Mary. In his anxiety to bring out clearly that these things were totally distinct, Elipandus had made imprudent use of the words "real sonship" and "adoptive sonship." These dangerous expressions confused the issues. There are no two sons in Christ: the Son of Mary *is* the Son of God, become man, though, obviously, His eternal birth from the Father is distinct from His temporal birth from His earthly Mother. He is both Son of God, and Son of Mary, but His sonship of Mary does not make Him "adopted" Son of God, instead of true Son of God.

Elipandus became intensely active in spreading his views. He wrote to the Emperor Charlemagne, and to the bishops of his Empire. Charlemagne sent letters to Pope Hadrian. A council was called at Frankfort in 794 at which the Papal legates presided. This council and a subsequent encyclical letter of the Pope utterly condemned Adoptionism. Unfortunately the obstinate old man, Elipandus—he was over eighty years old—would not submit, and as Toledo was in the power of the Moors, he maintained himself in his see, and died out of the Church. Felix of Urgel on the other hand first recanted, then relapsed, then recanted again, and died in peace with the Church, though there

is some reason to doubt the sincerity of his recantations. That the heresy did not spread widely, but was soon extinguished, was due to the indefatigable labours of an Englishman, the most famous theologian of his time, Alcuin of York, the friend of Charlemagne. In 800 Alcuin could write to Arno, bishop of Salzburg that over 20,000, clerics and laymen, had been converted to the truth.

§9. *The Nihilists, denying the union of nature and person in Christ.*

Three hundred years later through the speculations of the restless and fantastic Abelard, strange mental confusion arose in many minds about the reality of Christ's human nature. The error goes by the quaint name of Nihilism : Nothing-ism.

It came about in this way. We sometimes speak of Christ being " clothed " in human nature, and we regard His human nature as a veil or a vesture thrown over the glory of His Godhead. This is all very well as a metaphor, but the use of metaphors has its limitations. In the twelfth century some men abused the well-known text Phil. ii, 7, which says of Christ " being made in the likeness of men and in habit found as a man, He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death." The words " in habit found as a man " are a most literal translation of the Latin, " habitu inventus ut homo." The Authorized and Revised Versions read, " being found in fashion as a man," which is a closer translation from the Greek.

The schoolmen clung to the word " habitu," and playing on the allusions of the word : habitu=*vesture* ;

habitu=*by having*, as if equal to habendo, they said God the Son habuit hominem, He had, or possessed a man, but not He *was* a man. Manhood was His vesture or habit, not Himself. They were driven to this by a curious fallacy. They acknowledged no composition except such as gave rise to a new compound nature. Now God the Son had the immutable nature of God, and could therefore neither be altered nor added unto. Not realizing that in Christ there was no question of a compound nature, but only of union with a *person*, they falsely argued that the human nature, as joined to the Godhead, was really *nothing* for if it was some "thing" it would be added and compounded with the Godhead, a created thing would enter the Divinity, and a fourth would be added to the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. They did not deny some reality to Christ's human nature in *itself*, but they said this reality was not joined to God, but only a garment, a vesture of God, something not intrinsically, but only externally, united to Him. Christ's manhood they regarded as an instrument in the hands of God, which was not *substantially* united to Him. A man's garments are of course real, but from the standpoint of the wearer, they do in no sense add any reality *to him*. A man's tools are of course real, but they in no sense add any reality *to himself*, they are in no sense *he*, but only his instruments. So they spoke of Christ's manhood. In itself it was real, but to God the Son, it was *nothing*, except of course His garments or His instrument.

Thus the "Nothingarians" lost themselves in subtleties, which however hid the unsoundness of their inner thoughts. Christ's manhood is joined to the

Godhead in a substantial and intrinsic fashion, by the very personality of God the Son, the Divine Personality being to the human nature what our human personality is to our human nature. No union could conceivably be closer. No man's clothes share with him his personality; no man is incarnate in the tools he carries. Therefore the comparison of a vesture or an instrument with the Incarnation, is very imperfect and must not be pressed. It is absurd to speak of Christ's manhood being added to or compounded with the Godhead. Only things of the same class and category can be added together or compounded. The created cannot be added to the Creator, the finite to the infinite. No one ever believed such nonsense. God the Son assumed a human nature by giving it, through His Personality, the individuality it possesses. God did not receive, but God gave. As at the Creation nothing was added to God, though God gave being to all creatures, so at the Incarnation nothing was added to the Second Person of the Trinity, though, by assuming it unto Himself, He gave being to His human nature.

Pope Alexander III, in a rescript of 18 February, 1177, wrote to the bishop of Paris as follows: "As Christ, perfect God, is perfect man, it is amazing that any one should have the audacity to say that Christ is nothing in as far as He is man. Lest however so great an abuse should arise in the Church or so great an error be introduced, We command your Fraternity by these Apostolic writings that, having called together the doctors of the schools of Paris, Rheims and other neighbouring cities, you, by our authority forbid under anathema that any one henceforth dare to say

that Christ is nothing in so far as He is man, because, as He is true God, so He is true man, subsisting of a rational soul and human flesh." This rescript was inserted in the "Corpus Juris" and brought this weird error to an end.

§10. *The Ubiquitarians, ascribing divine attributes to Christ's humanity, and Kenosis-theorists holding temporary abandonment of divine attributes in Christ's divinity.*

While during the next three hundred years the schoolmen devoted deep studies to the Incarnation, no further heresy arose, but with the Reformation this mystery once more was subject to wayward speculation. In 1520 Luther denied the doctrine of transubstantiation in the Holy Eucharist, and proclaimed his new doctrine of consubstantiation, or the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, although the bread and wine remain without any change. Attacked by fellow Reformers, he defended his theory by claiming divine attributes for the body of Christ, and in particular the attribute of omnipresence. Christ's human body was supposed to be everywhere present, just as His divinity is. When asked how then Christ's presence in the Eucharistic bread differed from His presence elsewhere, considering that His body was said to be everywhere, Luther answered that in the Eucharist Christ's body was not only present but palpable, whatever that may mean. In the dwindling circles of Lutheran orthodoxy, this "ubiquity" or "everywhereness" of Christ's humanity is still in honour.

A hundred years later, between 1616 and 1627, the Protestant professors of the University of Giessen and

Tübingen, discussing the text Phil. ii, 7, Christ "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant," were divided into two camps. One camp held that during Christ's sojourn on earth there was an abstention from the use of His divinity, the other that His divinity was merely hidden. Again two hundred years later, about the middle of the last century, two German Protestant theologians, W. Gess and G. Thomasius, invented a new theory, which commonly goes by the name of Kenosis. This word is a noun formed of the Greek word, which is translated by "He emptied Himself" in Phil. ii, 7, and means: an emptying, exinanitio, in Latin.

This Kenosis theory strangely maintains that God the Son during His earthly life did actually forego, or laid aside, His divine attributes of omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. In a milder form, this theory suggests that the full divinity did not completely unite itself to the human nature, but, that during Christ's earthly life, it limited itself in its union with the human nature. In consequence, Christ need not have known more than any of His contemporaries about matters of history or science. He could be ignorant, He could err, He could grow in knowledge of God.

This theory found an entrance into English minds mainly through Dr. Charles Gore. It is a fruitless and illogical attempt to reconcile what goes by the name of the higher criticism of the Gospels with some sort of belief in the Incarnation. Higher criticism wishes to portray Christ as a simple Galilean peasant with a very limited outlook on life and things, though intensely holy, zealous and good. The kenosis theory

wishes to meet this modern attitude by allowing the limitations of Christ's mind, but ascribing them to the self-denial or "the emptying," the humility of God, who had freely shorn Himself of His knowledge and power in Christ. According to the Catholic Faith, it is absurd and blasphemous to say that one of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity did or could forego any of His divine attributes, for God is immutable and infinitely perfect, and even Christ's human soul ever saw God face to face, and in God saw all the treasures of knowledge which God wished it to see. Any progressive participation of the divinity by the humanity of Christ is utterly out of the question, for the hypostatic union is a fact, which either is or is not, and cannot allow of any less or more, any limitation or extension. The hypostatic union was as complete and as perfect in the Babe of Bethlehem as in the Christ of the Transfiguration. When we study the knowledge of Christ, we can see in what sense Christ could grow in knowledge. Christ could certainly never err about anything whatever, for Christ is God, and God cannot err even in His human nature.

We have swiftly gone through almost twenty centuries of speculation on the mystery of the Incarnation, marking some outstanding epochs. We have brought out flagrant errors, due to illogical thinking, or to sheer impatience with a mystery, which must on earth always elude man's full comprehension. These errors, however disastrous to those who clung to them, have been instrumental in bringing into clearer light some implications of the mystery. God, who can bring good out of evil, has used them for His greater glory and our greater advantage. The story

of the Church's battle to maintain unchanged the truth once delivered to the Saints, regarding the doctrine of the Incarnation, is one of thrilling interest. Naturally, no doctrine has been more subject to controversy; controversy long and bitter, controversy spread over wide regions and affecting many races of men; controversy which, alas! has aroused unparalleled passions and hatreds; controversy which has been obscured by political and national prejudices; controversy which is not even now at an end. Within the Church indeed no fierce controversy has arisen about this mystery for several centuries, though theologians still discuss many points, and are divided into well-known schools. Within the Church it has been a story of progress from light to light, certainty to certainty, from truths implicitly and dimly held to truths definitely acquired.

§11. *Modern Speculations outside the Church.*

Outside the Church it has been a sad story of retrogression, a continual and deliberate going back upon the past, abandoning positions once acquired, and unsaying definitions of old. It has been a seeking for vagueness, a dreading of precision, a loving of doubt and uncertainty, a glorying in searching but not finding. Christ has become a hazy figure, human and yet divine in a sense which no one knows, or dares to define. Christ was certainly a man, so they say, but what more He may possibly have been is left to the restless, unaided, ever varying, speculations, or rather casual thoughts, feelings, or moods, of the individual. One thing however "modern" people boast that they have achieved. They have gone back to the "historic

Christ." In sober fact, this means that they humbly believe the dogmas, pontifically proclaimed from some professorial chairs as the very newest acquisition of scholarship, first, that the Gospel of St. John is not by the son of Zebedee, and in any case is no trustworthy guide in studying the life of Christ, secondly, that of Matthew, Mark and Luke one should only receive what does not contradict the modern non-miraculous outlook on history, and thirdly, that St. Paul and the other writers of the New Testament, and the early Christian writers have formed a "Christ of faith," who must be sharply distinguished from the "Christ of history." Those who bow to this trinity of folly, and who worship this modern Moloch, those who scoff at the thought of an infallible decision of the Church, yet deem it sacrilege to question the latest pronouncement of an irresponsible professor, those (it seems) and those alone, are truly enlightened searchers for truth and have found "the historic Christ," leaving the Christ of faith to the pietistic fancies of the religionists!

They claim in this century to have re-discovered the real human Christ, whose true and simple humanity had been overlaid by the cumbrous speculations of Greek and mediæval philosophy. People are supposed to have forgotten that Christ was man, because they believed that He was God. So modernists assert in the plenitude of their ignorance, as if eight hundred years ago St. Bernard had never written his words of love towards Christ in His manhood, as if never a Catholic had sung: Ave verum Corpus, natum ex Maria Virgine, vere passum, immolatum, in cruce pro homine, o Jesu dulcis, o Jesu pie, o Jesu, fili Mariae!

As if a myriad times Catholic lips had not whispered, Anima Christi sanctifica me, corpus Christi salva me, or whatever be their equivalent in their native tongue! As if St. Francis of Assisi had never built his crib for the Babe of Bethlehem, and never a Catholic child had kissed the feet of the Holy Child at Christmastide! As if the Three Hours' Agony had never been preached on Good Friday, as if never an Italian had thrown his kisses towards the Crucifix, or never a German had knelt motionless with arms wide outstretched before the image of the Crucified! As if the Angelus had never rung, and throughout the length and breadth of Catholic Christendom the veneration of the Madonna had any other reason than rememberance that God became man! As if the Mass were not a sad drama, showing forth the death of the Lord until He come, and Communion a partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ!

Oh, the strange and piteous pretence of a noisy clique, who in public prints proclaim themselves superior Christians, having at last found a human Christ! Can people be misled by so miserable a make-believe?

CHAPTER II

MODERN ERRORS

§1. *God and man are incommensurables.*
§2. *Evolutionary Pantheism.*
§3. *Erroneous Ideas about Personality.*
§4. *Faulty Methods of Historical Criticism.*

MODERN errors on the Incarnation arise from a threefold source—from error about God, about personality, about the New Testament. Most modern errors on the Incarnation are rooted in error about God. The error about God must first be rectified before it is of any use to discuss the idea of Incarnation. Modernists assume that between God and man there is no difference of nature, but only one of degree. This is emphatically asserted by their own spokesmen. Prof. Mayor, the editor of the *Modern Churchman*, states (September, 1921) " the Substances" of the Deity and of the Humanity are not two, but one. On this primary falsehood the whole edifice of subsequent error is raised. Between God and man there is a difference in kind. He is by nature infinite, we are finite. The finite can never reach the infinite by mere addition, by mere increase of degree. Take any number and add to it any number, however large, it will never be an infinite number. Infinite number is a self-contradiction.

God and man, are incommensurables.

God is subsistent being, and we are not. We have our existence from Him. In Him we live, we move, we have our being. One does not explain the movement of a train by imagining an indefinite number of carriages. One does not explain subsistent being by postulating an indefinite magnitude of created dependent finite being. One does not explain life by an indefinite extension of inanimate matter.

Between our being and God's there is an eternal gulf fixed in substance of being, however close the embrace, however near the intimacy He deigns to allow us.

When, therefore, we speak of Incarnation, of a God-man, we do not mean that a man was exalted or lifted up to such sublime heights that he reached God. We leave between Godhead and manhood an infinite distance, we leave the two natures completely unchanged, we do not approximate them in any way *as natures.*

We teach that the human nature had no personality of its own, but leant upon, or was embraced by, was placed and kept in being, terminated and completed, by the Person of God the Son, who assumed it as His own. This is at least an intelligible proposition, however mysterious, whereas the Modernist assertion is in contradiction to the fundamental laws of thought.

The union of the two natures in Christ is not a sum of addition, as if Christ were a compound, and as compound more than one of its constituent parts. God can receive no addition. Human nature can indeed receive addition, but no amount of addition will make

it so extend as to reach the Godhead. The human and the divine nature are not parts of a whole, for God has no parts.

It is secret Pantheism which is at the root of nearly all misconceptions about the Incarnation. God is regarded as a vast being, of which this Universe, and especially we men, or at least our souls, are somehow parts, and any part must of course be in some sense "of the same kind" as the whole. We are not parts of God. Our soul is neither part nor outflow of the divine. Our souls, inclusive of the soul of Christ, are created by God. A created being cannot be added to an uncreated being, though it depends on the created being as an effect on its cause.

Creation is a mirroring of the Creator. No one, looking in a mirror, can say that there is more of himself, because his image begins to be.

God is an individual intelligence which is and ever must be distinct from man. Man is the image of God. However like to the original the image may be, it would cease to be an image if it exchanged likeness for identity. Image-hood is in essential contradiction to identity. For man to cease to be distinct from God would mean annihilation.

Resemblance is the negation of identity. For man, existence and divine image-hood are the same. Let the greatest artist paint my picture and let it be like unto me with a likeness beyond what even Rembrandt could dream, let it be like unto me with a likeness which only a divine and omnipotent artist could have achieved, as long as it remains *like* unto me, it must remain distinct from me. The moment it ceases to be distinct from me it ceases to be my likeness. My

portrait has vanished, I stand again alone, what was is no more. My picture has sunk into nothing.

If A is like B, A and B are distinct, A and B are two ; if they become one, it can only be by cessation of one or the other. Absorption in God is but a euphemism for annihilation. Likeness is a relation, and there is no relation without at least two terms. God and we are related as image is to reality ; therefore we can never be absorbed in God.

§2. *Evolutionary Pantheism.*

There is an error concerning God deeper still than that of static Pantheism. It is that of Evolutionary Pantheism, the error that there is nought but an " Eternal Becoming " in the sense of Henry Bergson. There is no God. All we know is a " becoming." This is an antiquated error, dug up again of late by a lively Frenchman, and greedily adopted because it suits the mental obsession of these days, the obsession of evolution. God is the Ideal. God is supposed to be something which is not yet, nor ever will be, but which is eternally to be striven after. God is Ideal Manhood. God is the Purpose of Man. God is not substance, nor being, mind nor thing ; God is " the Aim."

Some readers may think all this fanciful, and wonder why such foolish fancies should be refuted in a serious book. Unfortunately these strange mental aberrations are gravely propounded in publications which pass as religious and dedicated to the furtherance of Christianity. Shortly before Christmas 19—, the present writer perused in a public library some public prints

apparently Christian both in title and ostensible contents. The articles had a devout flavour and seemed to prepare the readers for Christmas. Let me give the summary of one of them of considerable length. It was asked whether "the little lump of humanity" born at Bethlehem was really the Creator of the Universe. The question was answered by pointing out that the Creator of the Universe was in reality "the Universal Consciousness" and that as the Babe of Bethlehem was of course but a speck of consciousness, he could not be the Universal Consciousness. No part equals the whole. The Babe of Bethlehem could, however, be said to be God. For what was God? The Purpose of Humanity. The Ideal of men. The Ultimate towards which we were all striving, but which always recedes. Now the Babe became the Ideal Man, and in this sense he was God, or became God to us. A few moments after the present writer had perused the article, and left the paper, he saw a venerable old lady with a huge magnifying glass poring over its columns. As they contained many very long words, no doubt the dear devout soul gloated over many a soothing word like Mesopotamia. Oh, the sad pity that the simple should be so gulled by a set of hypocritical rogues!

They have ceased to believe in the *existence* of God, and have substituted a god, who not yet *is*, nor ever will be, but is eternally *becoming*. They are therefore atheists in all but the name, while paying superstitious homage to an "Ideal Humanity," which Humanity, likewise, does not "exist" nor ever will be, but is eternally "in the process of becoming." These people, because they live in a country in which the

bulk of the population still dimly craves for the Christianity, which they have half forgotten, write such pious-sounding drivel about Christmastide in the vein of Herod, who said to the Magi: "I also may come 'and adore Him."

May God send the Spirit of Truth at least to the sincere and the simple to warn them, that they return by another way into their country, into that Church which was the home of their fathers, and in which they first saw the Star at its rising!

Meanwhile, it is the solemn duty of those who read non-Catholic religious literature referring to the divinity of Christ to use extreme caution, so as to be sure that the writer believes in God. Mere use of the word "God," or mere assertion of belief in God has become valueless as a test. The most abused term in modern non-Catholic literature is the word God. Hardly any one avows himself an atheist. The word is unpopular. Other expressions are used to hide the ugly nakedness of the term. The mere fact that a writer is an accredited minister of some "religion" or assumes the style and title of "Reverend" is no guarantee. Buddhist Bhikkus when in England would naturally assume this title, though they are open deniers of the existence of God. The serious reader must ascertain whether the writer believes in a personal God, that is an Infinite individual Intelligence, distinct from the Universe, who called this Universe into being, out of nothing, by an act of His free will. The use of the word "the divine" instead of God, and also the too prominent use of "Immanence" is a bad symptom.

Until one is quite certain that the writer believes in

God it is time lost to enquire what he thinks concerning Jesus Christ.

§3. *Erroneous Ideas about Personality.*

A further prolific source of error is the mental confusion about the meaning of personality. As we have dealt with this already, we here limit ourselves to a few further observations. Whatever philosophical speculation we favour regarding the ultimate constitutive principle of personality, leaves untouched the fact that a person is an individual being with a rational nature. Recent thought is utterly astray on this fundamental truth. In confused and vague terms men speak as if a person were a state or method of being, a process in the cognitive order, a mode of activity, a step in evolution, a phase of the eternal becoming, the fact of consciousness, etc., etc. But in truth a person is an individual BEING; an agent, not an action, an *individual*, not his peculiar mode of being or action. A person gives answer to the question WHO? not the question HOW? or the question OF WHAT KIND?

Sometimes personality is spoken of as if it were the sense of responsibility, or self-reflection, or self-realisation, or self-assertion. But these are derivative and metaphorical meanings, the use of which is allowable in literary matters, not in matter of logic or rigid thought. We exhort a young man who is easily led and too easily conforms to his surroundings to develop his personality, to assert his individuality, and we mean that he should, instead of adopting the ways and thoughts of others, develop his own character. We say

of an undistinguished man that he has little "personality" because he is cast in the common mould, and shows little by which he stands out from amongst his contemporaries. But such wide and vague expressions should not mislead a clear thinker. Because a person is an intelligent individual, and personality in the abstract is that formal aspect of reality by which an intelligence is thus individualized and rendered distinct from all other intelligences, therefore, in a broad and popular way, the sum of those characteristics by which a man is recognisable as different from his neighbours may be called his "personality." Such use of the word, however, has no place in the doctrine of the Incarnation. To introduce this vague meaning is to cause endless confusion of thought. As long as people discuss such inane questions as when did personality *evolve?* they betray a complete misunderstanding. Personality does not evolve, any more than a circle or a square, or a straight line. Such things *are* or *are not.* They begin to be, but they cannot evolve. A person is and when he is, he is in fulness of essential being. He cannot partially be, or imperfectly be. Now Christ's Person never began, He always was, for He is God. This one Person in time became man. Christ's manhood did not evolve. It began to be. For Human reason likewise is, or is not. Hence manhood cannot grow, it can only begin to be. Only things divisible can grow. A semi-man is an impossibility. Christ as man began to be. Two thousand years ago He was conceived by the Virgin Mary and born at Bethlehem. Christ is a Divine Eternal Person, who took manhood and ever since has been man, remaining God. Thus an eternal Person

has two natures or modes of being, a divine and a human one.

How this was brought about, how the human nature is held by the Divine Person, is for us an unfathomable mystery. We have no exact parallel to such an occurrence in our earthly experience. We hold it because Christ so taught, and He proved His veracity by His miracles, His teaching, and His character. We believe Him. This doctrine of the Incarnation, however mysterious, is an intelligible proposition. An intelligent man can hold it, for he understands the terms used, and they are such that they may be predicated of one another.

All other substitutes for this doctrine are either unintelligible or self-contradictory, or in contradiction to the historical information we possess concerning Jesus of Nazareth.

§4. *Faulty Methods of Historical Criticism.*

A third source of error is the modern attitude towards the New Testament documents—an attitude which is the contradiction of all scientific methods of history. According to Modernists, St. John's writings do not count, for "they are the product of the Christian experience and theological reflection of a disciple." St. Paul's writings are of hardly more value, because he invented "the Pre-existent-Christ christology." St. Matthew has not equal authority with St. Mark and St. Luke, for he modified the Christian message to suit his audience. Only St. Mark, when supported by the others and the unknown source Q, the original contents and value of which are likewise not absolute, can be used in the construction of an "historical"

christology. Moreover, any account which contains the miraculous is discredited by that fact itself. The material therefore at one's disposal to draw a portrait of Jesus of Nazareth has shrunk to such exiguous proportions, and is such doubtful stuff, which varies with the subjective prepossessions of every student, that the search for the historical Christ has become a laughable farce. Ponderous tomes are continually produced which show amazing erudition, but no common sense, and no sense of humour.

When ancient documents are treated according to principles so purely subjective, when literally scores of theories mutually destructive, each and all resting on nothing, but the inventiveness and the inner-consciousness of the author, dispute over a book so simple and sober as the New Testament, such methods of study excite the contempt of any intelligent man.

A recent reviewer of Loisy in the *Times Literary Supplement* complained that the author wrote as if he had a bitter personal animus against St. Luke, and he meekly remarked that such attitude of mind was not favourable to sound scholarship. No, it is not favourable to sound scholarship, this violent prepossession that miracles do not happen, and that Jesus of Nazareth must not exceed the measure of our common humanity, and that statements of first-century Christians should not be trusted.

People will flounder in useless speculations ever farther away from reality and truth, until they shake themselves free from the shackles of Modernist dogmas and let the documents speak for themselves; until they no longer take it for granted that the early Christians were dreamers with slight respect for truth;

until they return to sobriety and scientific humility in New Testament studies. Let us hope that soon healthier and stronger minds will sweep away the mental clouds that mislead so many scholarly men of to-day.

As an example of the purely arbitrary fashion in which the New Testament has been treated, let us take a book which has made a great sensation, *Kyrios Christos*, of W. Bousset. The methods employed would be met with scorn and laughter if applied to any other book in the world, though they are veiled by a dazzling display of miscellaneous erudition. In this book it is maintained that the thought of the divinity of Christ arose from the title " Kyrios " or " Lord," which the Gentile Christians at Antioch knew so well from the mystery-religions. Osiris, so it is said, Serapis, Isis, Cybele, Athargatis, Artemis, Hermes, Apollo, were Lord Osiris, Serapis, Hermes of Apollo. Lady Isis, Cybele, Atargatis or Artemis. The early Christians naturally said " the Lord Christ " or Kyrios Christos. St. Paul then (1 Cor. viii, 5-6) made Christ the unique Lord. " Although there are in heaven and earth gods many and lords many, we have but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and one *Lord* Jesus Christ by whom are all things." Thus the title Kyrios became a natural stepping stone to divinity. Christ Himself never said anything about Himself; He was a humble preacher of the doctrine of love and righteousness and did not designate Himself by any name or title.

Now, one would have thought that at least Christ designated Himself as the " Son of Man," in evident allusion to the Son of Man in Daniel, who was to come

on the clouds of heaven and sit on the throne with the Ancient of days. Nothing of the kind, maintains Bousset, this was an after-thought of his Palestinian disciples. Christ never applied this title to Himself.

Now, the term " Son of Man " occurs in the Gospels EIGHTY-ONE times, and all EIGHTY-ONE times on the lips of Christ Himself, and never on the lips of his disciples. In all the remainder of the New Testament Christ is never designated as "Son of Man" except twice, viz., by St. Stephen, when dying, " I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man, etc.," and in the Apocalypse, when the " Son of Man " is seen in a vision by St. John. Now let us watch how Bousset overcomes this difficulty. First of all, twelve occurrences are set aside, for they are in the Gospel of St. John, which does not count, according to Bousset.

Secondly, use of the title attested by only one of the three (Matthew, Mark or Luke) is of no value: one witness is no witness! in this way about twenty occurrences are set aside.

Thirdly, when, on the contrary, the title occurs in two witnesses, but is not mentioned by the third, the two speaking witnesses are of no value and the one silent witness is the only one who counts. Thus numbers of texts are discarded.

Fourthly, all texts even when attested by all three—Matthew, Mark and Luke, in which either the Messianic dignity, or the utterance of a prophecy, or the performance of a miracle, is attributed to Jesus are valueless, because they thereby betray themselves as mere products of the imagination of Christ's disciples.

Fifthly, even after this drastic purging of the Gospel, a few troublesome texts out of the eighty-one still

remain. These receive special treatment and also disappear.

Thus, though in eighty-one texts Christ uses the title of Himself, and in none it is used by others concerning Him, it is triumphantly declared that He never used it of Himself, but only others after His death used it of Him.

Could blind prejudice go further ?

Again, Bousset maintains that neither did Christ claim, nor did the early Jewish and Palestinian Church ever use the title " Lord." Now the three Synoptics record that Christ told those that fetched the colt, the foal of an ass, on Palm Sunday, to say : " The Lord (Kyrios) has need of it." The three record that Christ applied to Himself the words of the Psalmist : " The Lord said unto my Lord," etc. ; " If David then call him Lord, how is he his Son ?" They record that Christ said, referring to His own return : " Watch ye therefore, because ye know not what hour your Lord will come," and that He made the foolish virgins, who slept at His coming, say : " Lord, Lord, open to us."

These texts, of course, must be explained away.

Now the beginning of St. Luke's Gospel is obviously based upon an Aramaic and Palestinian document, as all allow. In those chapters we read that Elizabeth said to Mary : " Whence is this that the Mother of *My Lord* should come to me ?" The angels on Christmas night are said to have told the shepherds : " To-day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ *the Lord*." Even in St. Matthew, the Palestinian Gospel, Christ is often saluted as *Lord*, e.g., " Have mercy on me *Lord*, Son of David !" Christ is reported to have said : " Not everyone who saith to me *Lord, Lord*, shall

enter into the kingdom of heaven." According to St. Paul, even at Jerusalem the relatives of Christ are called " the brethren of *the Lord*." St. Paul uses the Aramaic expression Maranatha : " *The Lord* is coming." St. Peter on Pentecost Day uses the next : " *The Lord* said unto my Lord : Sit thou at my right hand," and concludes : " Let all the house of Israel most surely know that God has made both *Lord* and Christ this Jesus, whom you have crucified." St. Stephen at Jerusalem when dying prays : " *Lord* Jesus receive my soul."

Yet the early Palestinian Church is not supposed to have called Christ " Lord," and it is asserted that the title first arose in Gentile circles at Antioch, where they called their mystery-divinities KYRIOI ! The only available documents, the only available sources of information, tell us the direct opposite, but they are discarded. Can wrong-headedness go further ? When, then, the demand is made by Dr. Mayor that in the quest for the historical Jesus modern critical methods be used in dealing with the documents, we do not object to the word critical.

It is the word *modern* which we regard as superfluous. The age of the method is of no importance in the matter. The soundness of criticism does not depend on its being the very latest product of the press, or of a self-styled " modern " school. We only demand that the documents of early Christianity should be treated as all other documents of the same age and surroundings. We claim that dogmatic prejudices which obscure good sense should be set aside. It is sheer dogmatic prejudice to think that miracles cannot happen, and that writings that say that they did must be worthless

as history. It is dogmatic prejudice to hold that Jesus of Nazareth must have been just a man like any of us, and that any documents that say that He did or said things which exceed the common human measure must be untrustworthy. It is an outrage on history to suppose, without evidence, that the first followers and believers of Jesus of Nazareth were all devoid of common sense, or love of truth, and were in fact more or less irresponsible enthusiasts, who would write and accept anything. No display of erudition can make it credible that Christianity was started by a pack of enthusiastic simpletons.

CHAPTER III

PAGAN CHRISTS

§1. *Saviour-gods.*
§2. *Incarnate gods.*
§3. *Virgin-born gods.*

THE occurrence of Christian beliefs in non-christian religions is not seldom regarded as a proof that the Christian belief is valueless. This inference is not scientifically valid. All other things being equal, the wider spread a conviction is, the more likely it is to be some reflexion of the truth. The fact that pagan religions apply to their gods, what the Christian religion applies to God, should lead scientific observers to the supposition that there is something in human reason, which leads to identity of assertion, amongst circumstances and in places, and from persons, so strangely varied. The fact that many of these assertions are demonstrably false, in some particular, does not justify the rejection of the assertion in general, but rather enhances the likelihood of the constant factor in the same ratio as the variability of the concomitants.

Hence, if practically all pagan religions had a Christ, as the Christians have, this point in itself should lead scientific investigators to search for a cause of this phenomenon, and the first possibility that would suggest itself, would be the objective truth in the

conception of a "Christ." If in the world's history there were a real Christ as a matter of fact, this would be the simplest and most satisfactory solution of the problem. As the Christian doctrine is beyond compare the most consistent, coherent and intelligent conviction concerning a Christ, scientific men should investigate the proofs brought forward for its truth, and not give way to intellectual sloth or cramping prejudice, so setting aside the idea by the facile excuse that there are so many Christs.

Let us, however, study this matter somewhat in detail. If we analyse the popular idea of "Christs," we see that it contains a threefold element. "Christs" are supposed to be saviour-gods; incarnate gods; and lastly virgin-born gods.

§1. *Saviour-gods.*

We shall first consider "Saviour-gods."

Does paganism know many Saviour-gods? The overwhelming majority of all pagan gods are of course benevolent gods, the worship of purely malignant gods belongs to the lowest stratum of degradation in religion, and has never been predominant. Pratically all gods are thought of as benevolent towards their worshippers. Even the malignant gods are supposed to be sometimes placated, and to do a good turn to a worshipper. An utterly hostile deity can only be an object of hatred, not of devotion. When we speak of Saviour-gods, we cannot mean therefore merely benevolent gods who hear the prayers of their clients and help them out of distress. In this sense, the whole Pantheon consist of Saviour-gods.

What then are Saviour-gods properly so called?

They are the great divine rescuers, not of private individuals in answer to prayer, but of the human race from some cosmic calamity or inexorable fate, divine heroes combating gigantic evil out of love for their fellows, whether gods or men. Is Pagan thought really full of such Saviour-gods? There occur to the mind Prometheus in the Græco-Roman world, Ea and Marduk in the Babylonian world, the Shaosyant in the Iranian world, Osiris among the Egyptians, Mithra among the Persians.

Every one knows the Prometheus legend. Hesiod, almost a thousand years before Christ, gave twice an account of the story how Prometheus deceived Zeus, the highest of the Gods, first by cunningly so arranging the parts of the sacrifice, that the worthless portion seemed the richer and the richer seemed the worthless one, so that Zeus chose but worthless bones under a cover of fat. Angry Zeus in punishment for the crime of Prometheus, son of Japet and Themis, withdraws the gift of fire from mankind. But Prometheus, the friend of men, cheats Zeus again by stealing fire from heaven and restoring it to men. Zeus now shows his wrath with men by sending Pandora, the first woman on earth, who becomes the source of all evil. Prometheus, the fire-thief, is chained to a rock and a vulture devours his liver by day, for it grows again by night. Finally Heracles delivers the bound Titan with the consent of Zeus.

Now (first) Prometheus is not a god but a mortal, a titan, or giant indeed, but not a full member of the Pantheon. The title Saviour-god would be a misnomer. He is ranked amongst men, not amongst gods. Besides, Prometheus is not a saviour, in the sense of a

rescuer from evil. He is indeed "philanthropos," a friend of man, he is described as a teacher of useful arts to men, the father of civilization and culture, in fact the maker and fashioner of man, but a benefactor is not necessarily a saviour. The only approach to a Saviour rôle would be the theft of fire from heaven, after it had been withdrawn from men in punishment for Prometheus' own crime. But Prometheus' sufferings are in no way the means which regain the fire for man's benefit. They are merely the punishment borne by him after the theft, on account of his insolence to the Father of gods and men. Besides, the Prometheus legend is obviously what is called a culture-myth. Prometheus means Fore-thought; Epimetheus, the name of Prometheus' foolish brother, After-thought. Forethought taught mankind everything, especially the use of fire. Notwithstanding the power of hostile higher powers, storm, lightning and rain, man succeeded through Forethought in braving all adverse influences.

The similarity between the Greek Prometheus and the Christian Saviour is so distant, that the description of Prometheus as a Christ, a Saviour-God, can hardly be taken seriously.

The Christian Saviour bestows no temporal and cultural favours on men on earth, but redeeming man from the consequences of his sins, reconciles him to his Creator and prepares for him a happy eternity after death. A more complete contrast with Prometheus could hardly be found.

Amongst the Egyptians, Osiris is said to be the Saviour-god. Osiris was the first king of Egypt and he ruled his people in peace and prosperity. His

brother Set caused his death out of envy. Isis, his faithful wife, recovers the corpse of her husband, and joins the scattered remains together. The great gods, at her lamentations and prayers give life back to the inanimate body. But Osiris can no longer reign on earth. He becomes the king of the Netherworld, the Realm of the dead. His son Horus, however, together with Isis his wife, give battle to Set, the power of evil, and overcome him. Horus is the ancestor of the Pharaohs of Egypt.

Every Pharaoh when he dies, becomes an Osiris, in that he is resuscitated in the realm of the dead, and receives immortality in the Hereafter. This identification with Osiris is extended not merely to all dead Pharaohs, but to all the dead. Osiris in the Afterlife was judged by the gods, and found " justified." Thoth the god of eloquence and wisdom, pleaded for him at the bar of the gods. So every Egyptian hoped to be an Osiris, a " justified one " in the life to come. In fact, a dead person was in piety and courtesy referred to as Osiris N. N. Remarkable prayers and hymns express the hope of the living in Osiris, that they too may be Osiris hereafter. All their hope is said to centre in Osiris. Osiris alone is their salvation. The myth has very noble features, and the hope of immortality thereby expressed was deep and real. But in what possible sense was Osiris a saviour of men ? A saviour must be active and in some sense bring to others salvation from evil, but this myth knows nothing of a " saving " activity of this god of the Netherwoild. His name was the embodiment of the hope of immortality, and the dead claimed identity with Osiris as their quondam fellowman. Osiris, moreover, was no

doubt the judge of the dead, on whose verdict their eternity depended, for every man in the Netherworld received according to works done in this world. But nothing of this constitutes him a saviour-god, as Christ is a Saviour, who by his voluntary passion and death redeems His brethren from sin and saves them from evil. Osiris did not die for men. He was murdered by his brother Set, who cajoled him to lie down in a mummy case, the lid of which he slammed down, and then threw the case into the sea.

Was Mythra then, the one with the Phrygian cap, a saviour-god because he slew the bull from whose blood all good things arise? He was the god of light, he was the unconquered sun, he was the bringer of all good things of nature. But from what had he saved mankind? He was a beneficent god. But in what sense a redeemer? Those of his followers who had received the taurobolium, that is, who had been baptized in the warm blood of a bull, might style themselves "*renati in aeternum*" "born again for ever," but what was the meaning of their phrase if it was not a copy of Christian phraseology, and in what way was the Persian god considered the efficient cause of their "salvation"? Had Mythra, the Phrygian youth who leapt on the back of the bull and plunged the dagger into its throat thereby redeemed his clients? Did his own followers think so, and did they look to that mythical scene as the Christian looked to Calvary? Was Mythra a god who died that his creatures might live? Was he an innocent sufferer that sinners might be forgiven? What indeed have the deeds of Jesus and Mythra in common that both should be styled saviour-gods? What has the fanciful symbol for

fructifying sunlight to do with the Carpenter of Galilee?

The Babylonian Marduk, too, is said to be a saviour-god. Marduk is the young divine hero, the representative of light and order, the kosmos personified, who, when the older gods were cowed by the wild tumult of rebel Chaos, personified as Apsu-Tiamat, bravely faced the monster and slew it. In this sense he may be called a saviour-god, but then he was the saviour not of men, but of his fellow-gods. Man was not as yet created when this battle between order and chaos, light and darkness took place. It is Marduk himself who, according to one version of the myth, creates man at a later date. Marduk is a hero-god, undaunted in face of danger, and only indirectly a saviour even of fellow-gods, in that his courage averted a coming danger. The myth is an embodiment of the triumphs of Babylon over the political confusion of the pre-Arabian dynasties, expressed symbolically by the victory of Order over Chaos in the beginning. It is a creation myth, if you choose, not a redemption one. It is not a myth of mercy and forgiveness, not the rescue of a fallen world, not the self-humiliation of a lover of men to deliver them from merited punishment. It is a myth of boldness and daring. Man has ever lived to imagine brave heroes amongst its gods. The triumph of the Crucified over the serpent bears scant likeness to the slaying of Tiamat by Marduk.

There remains for our consideration the Shaosyant, or "the saviour" of the Zoroastrians. This saviour, however, is one who is still to come. He will appear before the end of the world. Three great prophets will then arise and usher in the new world, and of these

prophets the Shaosyant is the greatest. He is, or rather will be, a great teacher and leader of men, an announcer of good tidings, but he will not be saviour in the sense in which Christ was Saviour, he will not redeem, he will not atone for sins, he will not give his life as a ransom for many. He will be in no sense whatever God or divine, but at most a benign and beneficent messenger, a leader in the great cosmic struggle with evil.

This brief glance at the saviour-gods of the main religions of antiquity brings out the unique character of Jesus the Christ. There is no exact replica of the Christian Saviour in any religion whatever. The essence of the Christian idea is that God took a human nature, so that in that nature He might undergo punishment for the sins of men in their stead, and thus redeem them from sin and death. This idea is found in Christianity alone. Pagan myths are at most confused and incoherent descriptions of the triumph of order over chaos, civilization over barbarism, and the embodiment of the hope of some divine help for man in his struggle with the mighty forces of the evil world.

§2. *Incarnate gods.*

We come in the second place to the assertion that Our Lord is only one of the many incarnate gods and that pagan antiquity and present day religions in India and China are full of incarnations. The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is no doubt the most sober one of them all, and a certain romantic beauty cannot be denied to the story, but we are told that a sensible man realizes that it is only a survival of the imaginative stage of man's development, and that common sense

forbids us to take these things as historical facts. The present writer, using the word Incarnation in a conversation with a retired Indian colonel, was stopped short with the curt remark : " Man, if you had been in India ás long as I have, you would know what to think of incarnations !"

Let us see what there is in this objection, or rather in this play of the imagination, for it would be extremely difficult to formulate it in terms of logic.

Was pagan antiquity really full of incarnations ? The idea is certainly alien to Greek and Roman antiquity.

Greek and Roman gods could not become incarnate, for the simple reason that none of them was thought of as in any way " spiritual." They were human from the very outset. The only difference between the Greek or Roman gods and ordinary men was that the gods, though they could be wounded and injured, could not die. Hence the gods were " the immortals " ; and, secondly, that though of limited power, their powers far exceeded those of mere men. In such a system there is no place for an incarnation, and a story in which a god took a human nature is totally unknown in classical mythology.

Besides, " a god " and " God " represent two ideas essentially different, hence even the incarnation of a god would be no parallel to the Incarnation of God. It would at most be somewhat like to an angel or spirit taking human form, but an angel or spirit is not God, the Infinite, Uncreated, Omnipotent First Cause of all things. If a monotheistic creed had an incarnation only this would be a parallel to Christianity. It is, however, a striking fact that the other monotheistic

creeds of the world, Mohammedanism, Judaism, Parseeism, do not admit an incarnation. Even ancient Zoroastrianism, which is a close approximation to monotheism, knew nothing of God incarnate. Christianity is, as a matter of fact, the only religion in the world which teaches that God became man, and there is nothing strictly parallel to the Christian doctrine in any religion whatever, ancient or modern.

Semitic religions possess no incarnation of a god. No doubt Assyrian, Babylonian, Canaanite and Aramæan gods were represented by statues, and these statues were in some way identified with the gods that inhabited them. No doubt exploits were ascribed to Istar and other gods or goddesses, as if they were human beings. But there is not a vestige of an incarnate god, of a spiritual being, who in addition to his spiritual nature took also the nature of a man. There is nothing whatever approaching the Christian idea of the Incarnation of God. In Egypt gods were represented mostly under an animal form, and a few cases in human form.

Isis and Osiris were certainly considered human, but they were only human beings, who after death reigned in the world beyond in a sort of glorified manhood. There is nothing approaching incarnation in the Isis and Osiris cult. Osiris is in a sense an emblem of the resurrection, or rather of continuance of life after death, but this does not make him an incarnate god. He is rather a discarnate deity than an incarnate one.

Buddhism has no place for an incarnation of God, for it disbelieves in the existence of God, or at least regards the existence of God as an open question of no importance.

Later forms of Buddhism, comprised in the term "Mahayana Buddhism," has a number of Bodhisatvas, who at first might be regarded as incarnate gods. On closer consideration, however, it is seen that they are not such by any means. The extreme East is under the spell of the idea of "re-incarnation," not of God, but of all men and spirits. All beings, passing through a cycle of re-births, follow out their Karma till they reach Nirvana or cessation of conscious existence. The Bodhisatvas are no exemption to this rule, at least in theory, though by the lengthening of their existence, or rather illusion of existence, into periods of many million years, the end of their godhead is almost out of sight for the popular imagination. Besides, the Mahayana Buddhist gods were men on earth in a previous existence. They have passed beyond that stage, and, strictly speaking, they are not men now, though of course represented by images of human shape. Popular Buddhist piety may exalt some Bodhisatva almost to the throne of supreme god, and may sometimes approach monotheism, but in the measure of their approach they lose the idea of the "manhood" of their god. If a god becomes incarnate it is to Buddhist ideas a retrogression, a fall, a reversion of the wheel of existence. The Bodhisatvas, out of sheer kindness, retard their entrance into perfect Buddhahood, that they may teach "the Way" to others, but such a retardation of Buddhahood has nothing in common with the Christian idea of God-incarnate. Superficial observers imagine they see similarities where there are none. Because in European works on Eastern religions the word "incarnation" frequently occurs, they fancy that the word covers much the same idea in East and

West. Because they see a number of human figures worshipped and spoken of anthropomorphically, they at once conclude that these all represent incarnate gods, in some way comparable to God-incarnate in Christian lands. Nothing could be more unscientific.

There remains Hinduism. There, at least, one might say, is a real "incarnation." Who has not heard of the ten avatars of Vishnu? Is not Krishna, an avatar of Vishnu, and God-incarnate? Yes, in mediæval and modern speculations of Hinduism there seem to be parallels to Christianity. The Hindu Trimurti, Brahma, Siva, Vishnu suggest the Christian Trinity; the incarnations of Vishnu suggest the Incarnation of God the Son. But how old are these speculations? How far back beyond the Middle Ages do they reach? They most certainly do not represent early Indian religion. How far have they borrowed from Christianity, perhaps through Thomas, the Apostle, himself? Certainly Krishna, as an Indian god seems to precede the Christian era. He was a deified Rayput chief: Krishna the Son of Vidaki. But a tribal chief who is made a god after his death is no parallel to God-incarnate. The speculations which made him identical with Vadeva, and then saw in him an avatara of Vishnu, are certainly much later. Moreover, Vishnu is a god, not God, and Vishnu's avatars included those in a turtle, a boar, and a lion, which suggest rather the temporary taking of a visible shape than the permanent adoption of a nature. Vishnu's descent or avatar in Krishna therefore leaves a great deal to be desired before it can be taken as a rival to God's incarnation in Jesus Christ. Krishna is not even the last avatar of Vishnu, but was succeeded by others.

The exuberant fancy of Hinduism can hardly be put side by side with the precise and deliberate statement of Christianity that God has assumed, and will eternally retain, a human nature in Christ. In uninformed circles the hasty comparison Christ-krishna may find favour probably because of the accidental similarity of the sound of the names, but a soberer judgment realizes that more is required than similarity in sound to make Christ a duplicate of a popular Indian god.

Then again, even if some religions had achieved some approximation to the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, this would rather strengthen than weaken an argument in favour of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. We have seen in the first chapter " On the likelihood of an Incarnation " that the thought of God becoming man might easily occur to the human mind as something not unlikely to happen. If, then, we should find somewhere feeble approaches to this truth, or even somewhat fantastical distortions of this natural hope, so far from trying to explain them away, Christian apologists should rather welcome them as corroborations of their faith.

§3. *Virgin-born gods.*

Lastly, it is sometimes asserted that virgin-births are a familiar belief in pagan religions of all kinds.

This assertion is entirely untrue. There is no shadow of proof that any religion whatever contemporary with the rise of Christianity had the idea of a virgin-birth of its god.

The idea of a virgin-birth is totally alien to the mentality of first century religions, whether Jewish or pagan.

There were then current innumerable stories, mostly very unsavoury and obscene, of the amours of the gods with women on earth, but the births of the offspring of such unions were the very reverse of virginal.

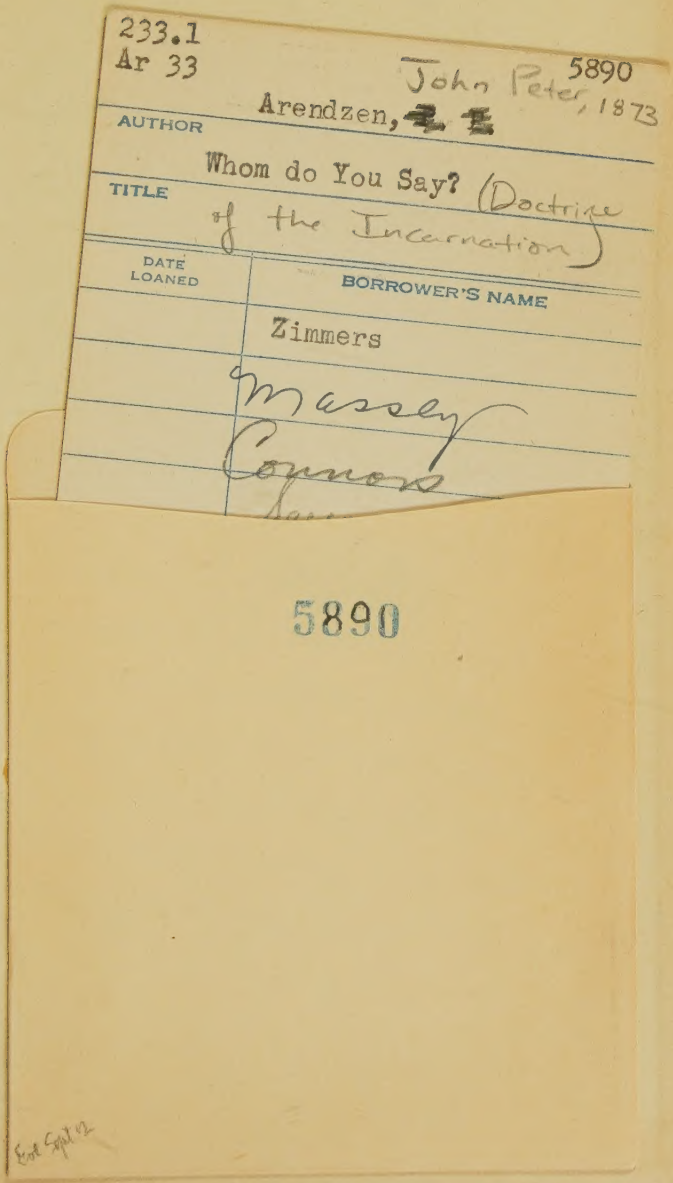
The idea of a Virgin-Mother is the perfectly unique possession of Christianity. Virginity was, alas! too little prized outside Christian circles to allow the mind of a pagan to think of the mother of his god as a virgin. The supposed parallels of Mithra, Buddha or Krishna are really worthless. Mithra never possessed manhood at all. He was a personification of the light, he was a sun god, a metaphor for the ever-conquering sunlight. They kept Mithra's "birthday" on December 25, because, having been conquered for a time by winter darkness, he annually had a re-birth when the days began to lengthen. In any case, he was spoken of as "rock-born," not virgin-born. He was called "rock-born" evidently because his shining disc emerged at dawn above the mountains. No sensible person should confuse this poetical metaphor with the expression of a belief in a virgin-birth. The two ideas have nothing in common. In interpreting some Mithraic sculptures as Mithraic "caves of Bethlehem with adoring shepherds," people have given way to imaginations, unjustified by reality, even if such sculptures were older than Christianity.

Neither was Buddha thought of as virgin-born. According to Indian ideas, all men pass through an almost interminable series of re-births; by no means always as men, but frequently as mere animals of various kinds. These re-births are determined by the merits of their previous lives, but in the case of a future Buddha he can choose his last birth and choose his

future mother. The historic Buddha, Sakyamuni, had already passed through a number of animal and human stages, till he finally chose Maya and entered her side in the guise of a six-tusked little elephant. But Maya had already had a number of other children, and her husband had had many hundreds of them. That Buddha's last birth differed in any way from his previous births, or that his last mother conceived him virginally, is nowhere suggested. Indeed, everything suggests the contrary. Moreover, it is highly doubtful if even this absurd story goes back beyond the beginning of our era.

Practically the same applies to Krishna. Hindu mythology does not betray any tendency to set value on virginity. The tendency is painfully the reverse. Any similarity in the birth story of Krishna to that of the birth of Christ, if there be such, can be due only to late and deliberate imitation of the Gospels.

This whole subject would be unworthy of serious consideration, were it not that the point has often been repeated, and probably will continue to be repeated for some time to come, by belated retailers of antiquated opinions, which have long been rejected by honest students.



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